STORY BY
HANJIRO TSUKIOKA
ART BY
HIKARU TANAKA
Scarlet
EMPIRE
2

2
Scarlet EMPIRE
STORY BY
HANJIRO TSUKIOKA
ART BY
HIKARU TANAKA

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Stay thy hand!

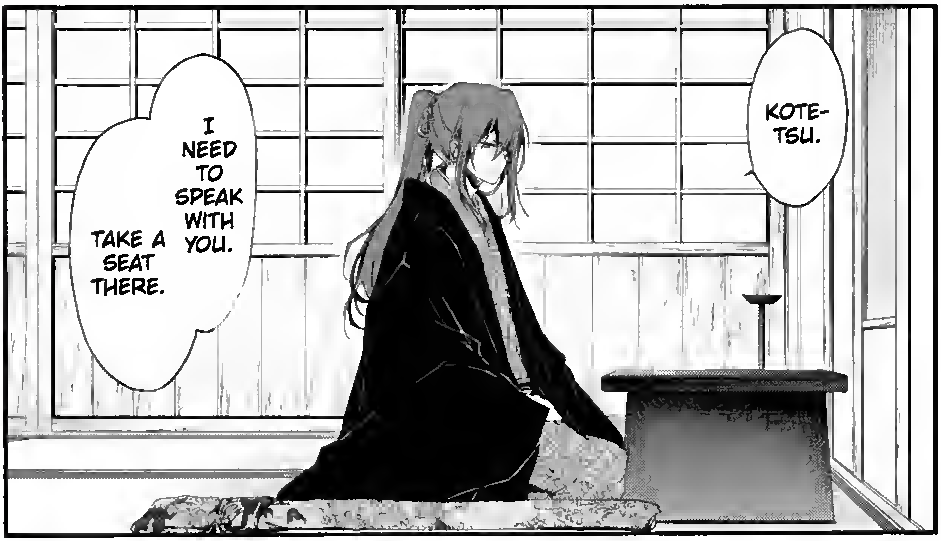
CHIRP
CHIRP
TWEET
.....A DREAM...?
CHIRP
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP!?
CLATTER
FLINCH

WHAT THE...?
YAYOI...?
LEMME SLEEP A LITTLE LONGER...
IT'S OOKI!
THE CAPTAIN IS CALLING FOR YOU.
STOP LAZING ABOUT AND DRESS YOURSELF.
DON'T KEEP HIM WAITING!
スパーン!!
SLAMMM
BLINK
...SO...
...IT...
...WASN'T A DREAM, HUH...

Chapter 5: Proof of a Miracle

THAT DAY...
...THE MOMENT I DREW MY SWORD, SOMEBODY CALLED OUT...
...AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS HERE IN EDO...
.....
THAT VOICE I HEARD THEN... WHO THE HELL WAS IT?
AND WHY DID SAGARA HAVE THE OTHER SWORD WHEN I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT IT WITH ME FROM MY OWN TIME?
STAND
CLATTER
WELL, THINKING IT OVER BY MYSELF WON'T CLEAR THINGS UP...!

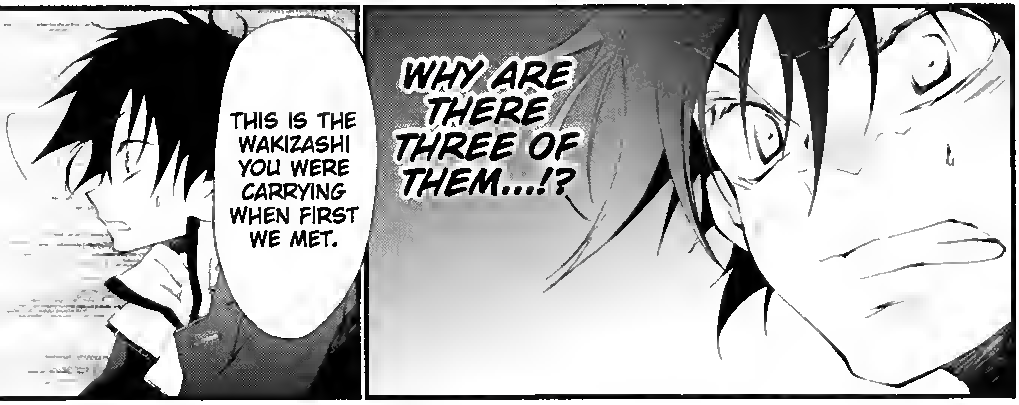
BANG
SAGA-
RA!!


KOTE-
TSU.
I
NEED
TO
SPEAK
WITH
YOU.
TAKE A
SEAT
THERE.

SLIDE
スッ
AH,
YOU'VE
BROUGHT
YOUR
SWORD
...
THAT
MAKES
THINGS
EASIER.
...?

OH...
OKAY
...
?

CLUNK
RUSTLE
TH...
...
THAT'S ...!


THIS IS THE WAKIZASHI YOU WERE CARRYING WHEN FIRST WE MET.
WHY ARE THERE THREE OF THEM...!?

IT IS AS SIMILAR TO THE ONE I GAVE YOU AS TWO PEAS IN A POD...
THEY HAVE THE SAME SCRATCH ON THE POMMEL AS WELL.

I COMMISSIONED THOSE TWO BLADES MYSELF.
A THIRD ONE SHOULD NOT EXIST.
AND ALTHOUGH IT HASN'T RUSTED...
...THIS WAKIZASHI HAS NOT BEEN CARED FOR PROPERLY IN A WHILE...
IT'S JUST AS THOUGH...
...IT HAS BEEN SLEEPING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

LAST NIGHT, YOU SAID...
...RYOUMA SAKAMOTO WAS ASSASSINATED.
OH. UM...
THAT WAS... UH...
WHAT'S MORE...
...YOU KNEW OF SHIKYOU KAWASE, DID YOU NOT?
WELL, I...!
I JUST MISTOOK HIM FOR SOMEBODY I KNOW! THEY LOOK EXACTLY THE SAME.
BUT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, HE CAN'T BE HERE IN THIS WORLD—
"THIS WORLD"?
OH! UM! I... I MEAN...!!

...EVER SINCE YOU CAME TO US, IT'S BEEN ONE MYSTERY AFTER ANOTHER.
YOU CAN UNDER-STAND... I FIND MYSELF CURIOUS.
.....
...ER...
I DUNNO WHERE TO START...
AND, UH...
...THIS IS...
RUFFLE
...MAYBE A BAD TIME TO BE TALKING ABOUT THIS, BUT....!!
...
SAGARA
...
LOOK, SWEAR YOU WON'T LAUGH, OKAY ...!!?

I'M...
...NOT FROM THIS TIME.
—!?
BUT... THAT'S ...
YOU MEAN TO SAY...
...YOU CAME FROM THE FUTURE ...!?
I DON'T REALLY GET HOW, BUT...
...I THINK ...
...I CAME HERE FROM A JAPAN MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THIS ONE.
NOD
SLIDE
GSK
ガ
URK!
!!?

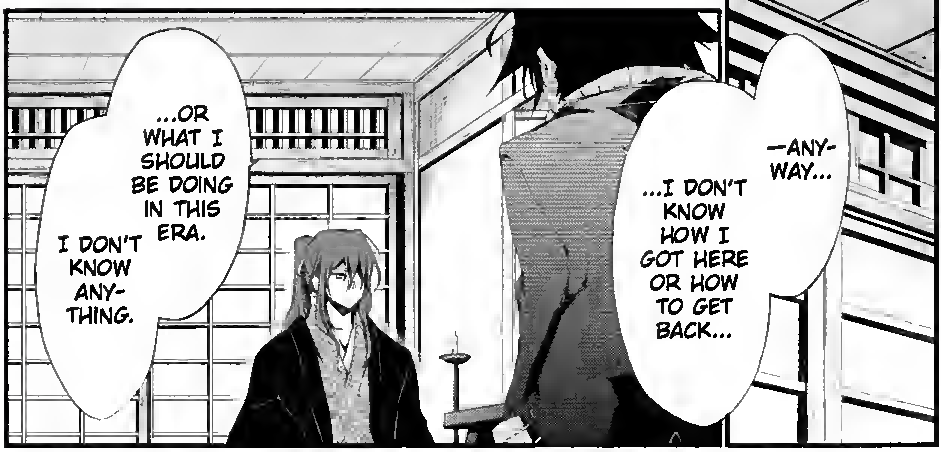
HOW FASCI-NATING...
WHAT A TALE...
PLEASE, DO TELL ME MORE!!
URK...
SERIOUSLY...?

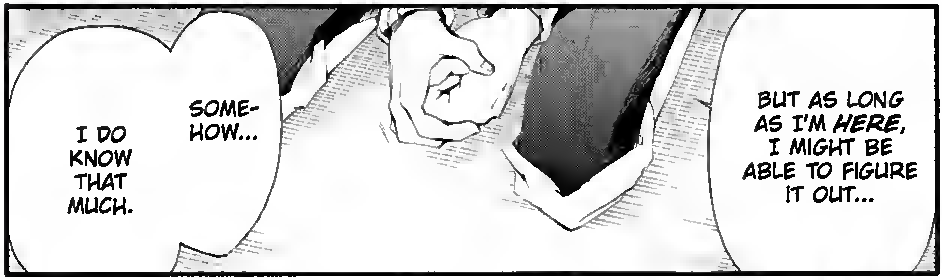
—SO, IN SHORT, THIS FELLOW WHO RESEMBLES SHIKYOU...
...USED AND SLIGHTED YOUR BROTHER, WHO RESEMBLES OOKI...
...SO YOU DREW YOUR BLADE TO AVENGE HIM, BUT CAME TO THIS AGE INSTEAD...?

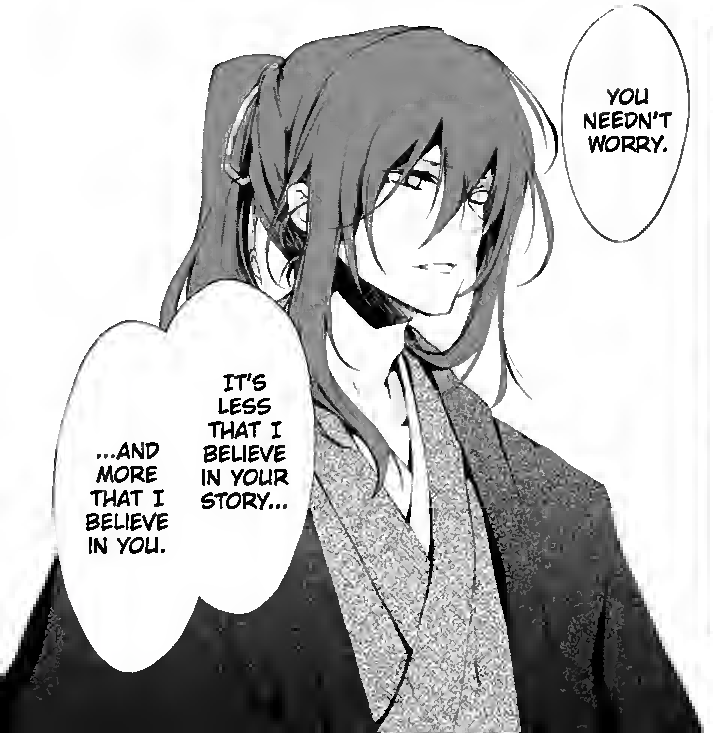
I THINK YOUR MENTAL IMAGE MIGHT BE A LITTLE OFF?
NAY, NAY!
FOUL KNAVE, HOW DARE YOU!?
DESIST, O BROTHER MINE!
BROTHER WHO RESEMBLES OOKI
O BROTHER MINE!
FELLOW WHO RESEMBLES SHIKKOU
HAR HAR!
...LIKE THIS...?
SOMETHING...

HUH?
I SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR WORLD!
.....

UH.
CRUNCH
LOOM
WHOA!
OUR CULTURE!?
OUR LEARNING!?
AND—
EH!!?
WHAT HAS BECOME OF OUR PEOPLE!?
SAGARA, HANG ON A SEC—
RUSTLE
SAKE!? WHERE DID HE...?


—ANY-WAY...
...I DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT HERE OR HOW TO GET BACK...
...OR WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING IN THIS ERA.
I DON'T KNOW ANY-THING.


BUT AS LONG AS I'M *HERE*, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT...
SOME-HOW...
I DO KNOW THAT MUCH.


YOU NEEDN'T WORRY.
IT'S LESS THAT I BELIEVE IN YOUR STORY...
...AND MORE THAT I BELIEVE IN YOU.

SO UNTIL I DO, IF I COULD PLEASE STAY—
KO-TETSU.

UM...
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN...?
GONG
?
POINT
WHAT, IN-DEED!!
GAH!
!!??
x2

IT'S YOUR EYES.

...TRUTH BE TOLD...
...WHERE YOU CAME FROM MATTERS LITTLE.

SUCH A THING IS NO BASIS FOR TRUSTING A MAN.
I, UH...
...DON'T REALLY GET IT...
UM...
BUT...

TOO CLOSE...
IN OTHER WORDS ...
...THE MARKS OF TRUST-WORTHI-NESS... OR LACK THEREOF ...
...ARE DIFFERENT FOR EVERY MAN.
...?
YOU MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO MAGNIFY YOURSELF.
YOUR EYES ARE ALWAYS FRANK AND UN-CLOUDED.
FOR THAT, I SHOULD LIKE TO TRUST IN YOU.
HENCE, I DO.
IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN THAT.

NOW THEN, THIS WAKI-ZASHI.
DO I HAVE YOUR LEAVE TO LOOK AFTER IT?
SURE...
I SHOULD STILL LIKE TO ENTRUST YOU WITH THOSE TWO BLADES.

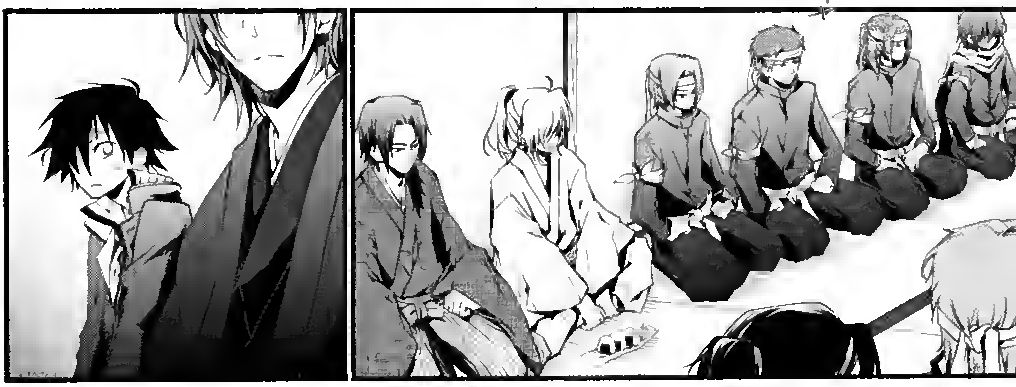
KOTE-TSU.
LET US FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE!
WE WERE BORN IN DIFFER-ENT ERAS, BUT...
...NOW WE FIND OUR-SELVES SHARING THIS TIME...
THESE SWORDS ARE PROOF OF THAT MIRACLE.
KOTE-TSU.
I'LL SAY IT AGAIN— I NEED YOUR STRENGTH.
I HOPE YOU'LL STAND WITH US HERE UNTIL YOU FIND A CLUE TO BRING YOU HOME AGAIN.
I WILL ASSIST YOU IN ANY WAY I CAN.
PLEASE, LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH IN RETURN.

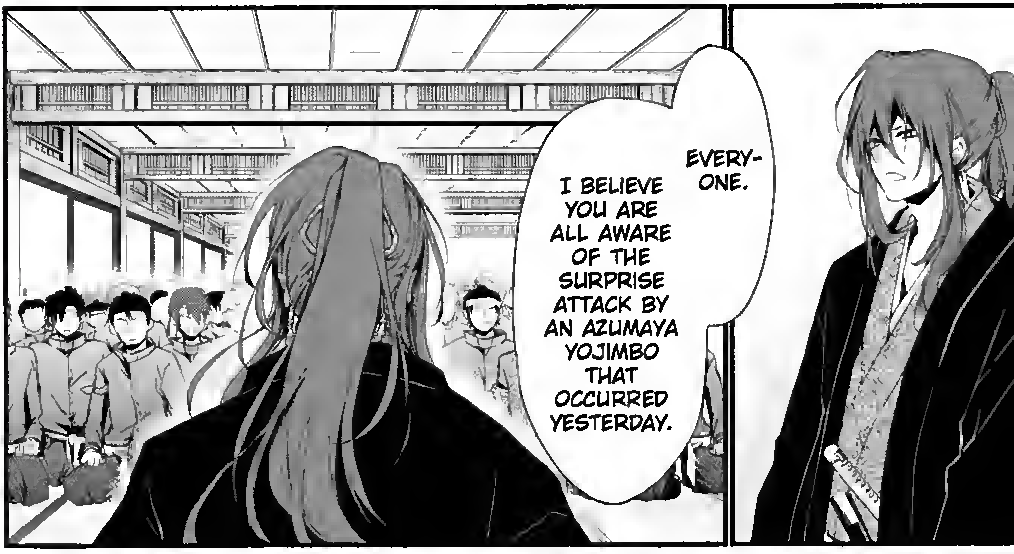
I AM IN YOUR DEBT!
CLACK
NOW, A TOAST...!
I...I DON'T WANT ANY SAKE...
RUSTLE
NOW, NOW, DON'T BE SHY!
RUMMAGE
SIGN: AZUMAYA
東屋
YEAH!
I'LL DO IT!

SHIKYOU-SAMA.
THE ROSHI BAND'S NEWEST RECRUIT SEEMED TO KNOW YOU ON SIGHT. DO YOU KNOW HIM...?
SHFF
FOR THAT MATTER, HE WAS SPEAKING WITH SAGARA IN A VERY FRIENDLY FASHION.
...WHAT IS HIS NAME?
KOTETSU MIYASAKA.
PERK
...I KNOW OF NO SUCH MIYA-SAKA.
CLACK
BUT...
...IF SAGARA HAS TAKEN A FANCY TO HIM, THAT'S ANOTHER MATTER...

FLINCH
THUD
SIR...
...WHY DO SAGARA'S DOINGS MATTER SO MUCH TO YOU?
SHFF
THAT...
...IS NO BUSINESS OF YOURS.

CHATTER
CHATTER


CHATTER


I BELIEVE YOU ARE ALL AWARE OF THE SURPRISE ATTACK BY AN AZUMAYA YOJIMBO THAT OCCURRED YESTERDAY.
EVERY-ONE.

!!?
THIS ORGANIZATION AIMS TO TAKE THE LIFE OF RYOUMA SAKAMOTO.
LORD SAKAMOTO IS A MAN OF GREAT TALENT AND VALUE TO OUR COUNTRY...
WE MUST DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO PROTECT HIM!
—BUT IF WE ARE BEING HONEST, THAT'S JUST A PRETEXT.

THE ATTACK-ER'S NAME IS...
...SHIKYOU KAWASE.
HE IS THE STAFF OFFICER OF AN ORGANIZATION OF ASSASSINS CREATED BY THE SHOGUNATE.

ALREADY, TOO MANY OF US... ...HAVE BEEN GRAVELY WOUNDED BY SHIKYOU KAWASE!
WE CANNOT ALLOW HIM TO RUN WILD ANY LONGER!!
SWISH
TO BACK DOWN NOW WOULD TARNISH THE NAME OF OUR ROSHI BAND!!
TO PUT A STOP TO THEIR RAMPAGE... WE MUST ATTACK THE AZUMAYA.
PLEASE, LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH!!

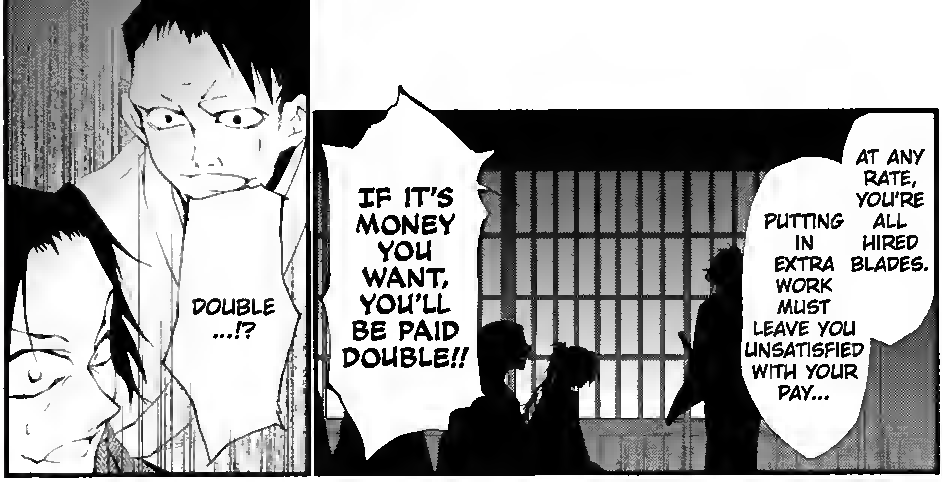
SILENCE
...OF COURSE!!
I'LL LEAD THE CHARGE!!
WE'LL WIPE AWAY THE DISGRACE YOU'VE SUFFERED, CAPTAIN!!
AS IF...
...WE COULD STAY QUIET AFTER SEEING THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE, SAGARA-SAN!!
YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT!!
YOUR PAIN IS OUR PAIN, CAPTAIN!!
WE'VE ALWAYS HAD ONE GOAL!
WE FIGHT TOGETHER, FOR OUR COUNTRY... AND OUR CAPTAIN!!

TOMOR-
ROW...
...WE
RAID
THE
AZU-
MAYA.
I'LL
ISSUE
MY
COM-
MANDS
SHORTLY.
BIDE
YOUR
TIME,
ALL OF
YOU, AND
AWAIT
YOUR
ORDERS.
YES,
SIR!!

CAP-TAIN!
TMP
TMP
FOR THIS MIS-SION...
...I'M MOST FAMILIAR WITH THE AZUMAYA, SO PLEASE TELL ME WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ME DO!
HMM, INDEED...
WELL THEN, PLEASE CONTINUE TO PATROL THE PERI-METER.
TALLY THE NUMBER OF ROSHI WHO WILL BE ON THE ENEMY'S SIDE TOMORROW.
YOUR WORD IS MY COMMAND!
I SHALL RETURN WITH MY REPORT LATE TONIGHT.
JUST WAIT RIGHT HERE, SIR...

ARE YOU ALL HERE?
TO-NIGHT ...
...WE RAID THE SATSUMA MANSION.
MUTTER
WHA ...?
T-TODAY...?

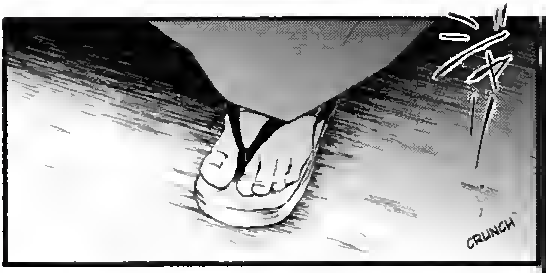
THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND COMES HERE TOMOR-ROW.
WE'LL CRUSH THEM FIRST.
B-BUT, LORD KAWASE, WE'RE IN NO PROPER POSITION TO RAID THE...
INDEED... WE HAVEN'T BEEN ASKED TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A TASK!
YES, THAT'S RIGHT! WE'RE MEANT TO ASSAS-SINATE RYOUMA, THAT'S ALL...
SILENCE !!
THEY'RE THE ONES MOST COMMITTED TO PREVENTING RYOUMA'S ASSASSINA-TION!
WE HAVE TO RID OURSELVES OF THE WHOLE MISERABLE LOT OF THEM FIRST...!
FLINCH


DOUBLE ...!?
IF IT'S MONEY YOU WANT, YOU'LL BE PAID DOUBLE!!
PUTTING IN EXTRA WORK MUST LEAVE YOU UNSATISFIED WITH YOUR PAY...
AT ANY RATE, YOU'RE ALL HIRED BLADES.

IN... IN THAT CASE...
SHIKYOU-SAN SURE KNOWS HOW TO CUT A DEAL...
HMPH. PETTY CURS...

SWISH
AS FOR THE REST, DO AS YOU LIKE.

I EXPECT HARD WORK OUT OF YOU IN RETURN FOR YOUR REWARDS.
...HOW-EVER...
...I WILL BE THE ONE TO KILL SAGARA ...!


CRUNCH

LET'S GO.
FSSSH
SKSH

SKSH
LET'S GO.

FSSSH

Chapter 6: Secrecy Is the Soul of Strategy

LET'S GO.
YOU CAN GET RID OF THEM ALL...
...EXCEPT FOR SAGARA.
GRRRUMBLE

RATTLE
HRAAAAH!!!
THDDD
...WHA ...!?
RATTLE
RATTLE
SLAM
SLAM

THUD
THUMP
THUD
...WHAT'S GOING ON...!?
THERE'S...
...NOBODY IN THE MANSION ...!!!
LORD KAWASE!
WHAT IS THE MEAN-ING OF THIS ...!?

HUH...?
CLATTER
CLATTER
THE PLACE IS...
...AN EMPTY SHELL!
IT...!
IT CAN'T BE! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE ...!!
...ASAI.

SPLURT
AAAAH
AH
NGH...
CREAK
WHA...!?
WHAT ARE YOU... DOING...!?
THUD
HOW DID...
...THIS HAP-PEN?

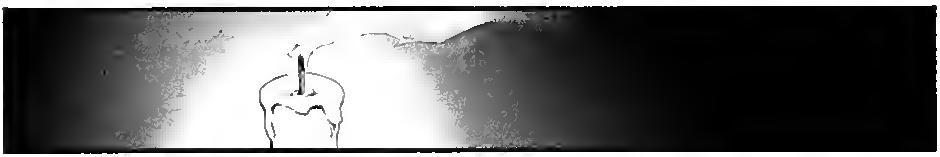
...I...
I DIDN'T ...!
KCHK
THAT SAGARA MUST HAVE...!!
YOU FILTH...
THIS WAS ALL A DAMN TRICK !!
KRAK
EEE!
WHOOM
SHI...
SHI-KYOU-SAMA... PLEASE ...!
KRRRSH
PLEASE, FORGIVE ME...!!
SHIVER
SHIVER
...DIE.

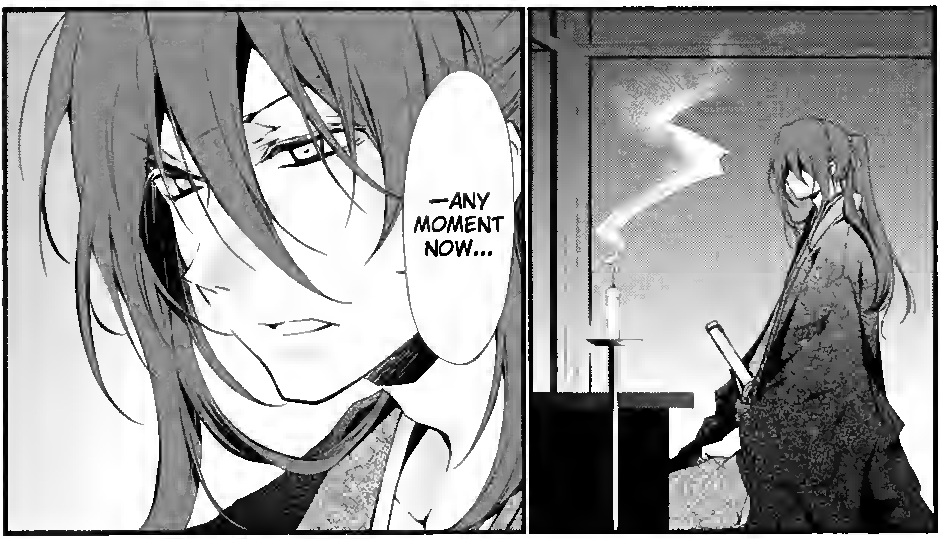
SPLAT
SPLATCH
WHUMP
AND TO HELL WITH YOU ...!!!
HEH HEH HEH...
SAGA-RA...
KCHK
NOT BAD. NOT BAD AT ALL...
... HEH ...
FLINCH

...OUT-FOXED ME THIS TIME...
CLENCH
DRIP
YOU'VE ... ... REALLY ...
... HUHH ...!?
GLARE
!!!
AH...
R- RUN AWAY ...!!
SLAM
STOMP
STOMP
AAAH ...!!
STOMP

YOU'RE UNDER AR-REST!!
御用
LANTERN. TOWN WATCH
SEIZE THESE RUFFIANS AT ONCE!
WHA ...!?
WHAT'S THE TOWN MAGIS-TRATE DOING HERE ...!!?

ISN'T THE SHOGUNATE SUPPOSED TO BE ON OUR SIDE...!?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON...!?
LORD SHIKYOU ...!!
SAGA-RA...
YOU WON'T...
...GET AWAY WITH THIS...




—ANY MOMENT NOW...

ER... SAGARA-SAN...?
WHAT'S HAPPENING "ANY MOMENT NOW"...?

ARE YOU GOING TO...
...TELL THE REST OF US WHAT'S GOING ON ANY MOMENT NOW?
YOU WERE JUST LIKE, "EVERYBODY, GET OUT OF THE MANSION!" ALL OF A SUDDEN...
HOW COME YOU ONLY BROUGHT US WITH YOU...!?
...
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING!?
MAKING US WALK ALL NIGHT LIKE THAT!?
WAVE
WAVE
FLINCH
WHY, YOU!
THAT'S NO WAY TO SPEAK TO THE CAPTAIN ...!!
SNARL
WATCH OUT...
GOING GET A SHORT FUSE...
THAT'S RIGHT!! AND WHY...
...DID WE HAVE TO COME TO AN INN IN FUJISAWA STATION!?

INDEED... YOU SPOKE OF A RAID ON THE AZUMAYA TOMORROW, BUT...
...WHY HAVE WE REMOVED TO THIS PLACE, A GOOD TEN LEAGUES FROM THE MANSION?
SSK
TO EXPLAIN THE DETAILS ...
...IS TO TELL A STORY FOR WHICH I MUST BEG PARDON.
I SHALL RETURN WITH MY REPORT LATE TONIGHT.
JUST WAIT RIGHT HERE, SIR...
TMP
TMP
TMP
MUTTER
"LATE TONIGHT"... EH?
MIZU-HARA.
A WORD, PLEASE.

...I MUST THANK YOU AGAIN FOR TAKING THE TROUBLE TO COME.
LORD IMUTA.
LORD MASU-MITSU.
NOW THEN, WHAT DID YOU WISH TO SPEAK ABOUT...?
IT'S ALL PART OF OUR DUTIES AS SATSUMA RETAIN-ERS.
OH, COME NOW, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

EVERY WORD HAS ALREADY BEEN LEAKED TO SHIKYOU KAWASE.
THE ATTACK ON THE AZUMAYA, OF WHICH I JUST SPOKE...
...!?
コクン
NOD
A TRAITOR !?
...IT CAN'T BE...
YOU MEAN ...
...THAT MEETING JUST NOW WAS...
WITH THIS INFORMATION IN HAND, SHIKYOU WILL SURELY RUSH TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE AND ATTACK THIS MANSION.
AND THAT WILL BE OUR CHANCE...

...MERELY FOR SHOW...?
SMILE
FIRST OF ALL, THE MANSION MUST BE EMPTIED BEFORE NIGHTFALL.
THEN, AS SOON AS THEY'VE ALL COME INSIDE...
...WE WILL SURROUND THE MANSION WITH THE TOWN MAGIS-TRATES.
THE TOWN ...!?
YOU'D USE THE STRENGTH OF THE SHOGUNATE AGAINST THEM!?
YOU DON'T SAY... I NEVER WOULD HAVE GUESSED!
REALLY... THERE'S NO ONE QUITE LIKE YOU...
NOW, THEN...

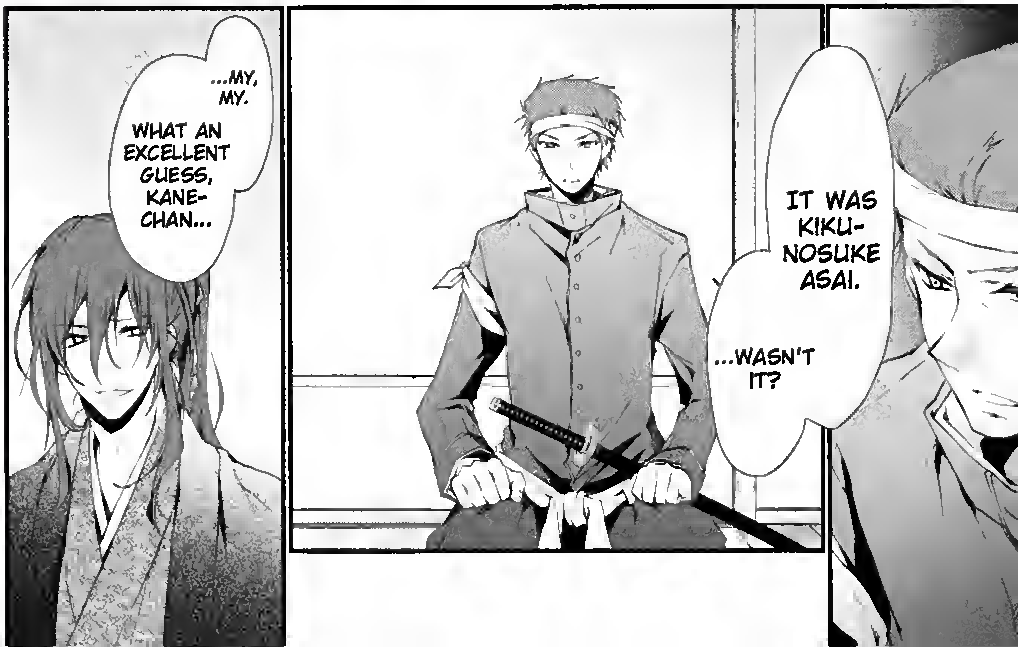
BUT OUR ENEMIES ARE EMPLOYED BY THE SHOGUN-ATE...
GIVEN THEIR POSITION AS TOWN MAGISTRATES, THEY CANNOT BE SEEN TO OPENLY SUPPORT A PACK OF RUFFIANS LIKE THOSE ASSASSINS...!!
NO... I SEE IT NOW!!
THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN, ISN'T IT?
THEY'LL HAVE TO ARREST THE LOT OF THEM, WITH NO HARM DONE TO US...
BUT THE PROBLEM IS SHIKYOU KAWASE... HE SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO DRAG LORD SAKAMOTO DOWN.
IF HE SLIPS THROUGH THEIR NET, HE'LL HEAD FOR KYOTO.
TO GUARD AGAINST THAT CHANCE, I WILL SET OUT FOR KYOTO AHEAD OF HIM TO PROTECT LORD SAKAMOTO.
I SEE...!
IN THAT CASE, JUST LEAVE THE REST TO US WHILE YOU'RE AWAY!
SAIGOU-SAN SENT US WITH ORDERS TO LEND ANY AID WE COULD, AFTER ALL.
...THANK YOU FOR YOUR DILIGENCE.

LORD IMUTA. LORD MASUMITSU.
MIZUHARA.
I SHALL RELY ON YOU IN MY ABSENCE.
—S-SO...
...THE ATTACK ON THE AZUMAYA...
YOU NEVER MEANT TO DO IT IN THE FIRST PLACE...!?

WHAAAT?
SA-GARA-SAN, YOU'RE TERRI-BLE!!
CLATTER

TO DECEIVE MY FOE, I FIRST DECEIVED MY FRIENDS...
I BEG PARDON FROM YOU ALL.

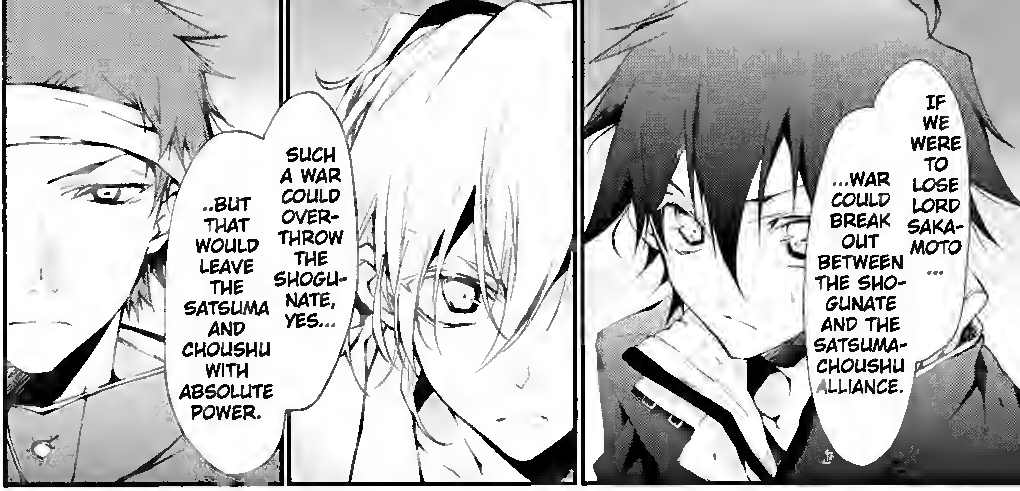
S-SO...
...THIS SPY YOU SPEAK OF WAS...
AND YOU WERE NEVER INNO-CENT.
IF HE HADN'T TRICKED US, IT WOULDN'T HAVE WORKED.
IDIOT ...
ROLL
ROLL
INNO-CENCE !?
FLAIL
FLAIL
I'M SO EMBAR-RASSED!! MY POOR LOST INNO-CENCE!!
TRICKING ME LIKE THAT AND PUTTING ON AN ACT...
WAAAAH!


...MY, MY.
WHAT AN EXCELLENT GUESS, KANE-CHAN...
IT WAS KIKU-NOSUKE ASAI.
...WASN'T IT?

NO WAY!!
ASAI-KUN!? THE GUY WITH THE CRAZY EYE-LASHES!?
LEAP
OH...
EYE-LASHES...? YOU MEAN, THAT GUY!?
I COULD TOTALLY SEE IT BEING HIM!
HEH-HEH
THAT'S JUST LIKE YOU, KANEDA-SAN.
SO YOU'D FIGURED IT OUT YOUR-SELF...
YEAH, YEAH!
YOU'RE REALLY SOME-THING ELSE!
SH
.....
THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THOSE EYELASHES...
SERIOUSLY...
AREN'T YOU JUST BAD-MOUTHING HIM NOW?
WITH A STRAIGHT FACE TOO!
ASAI WAS A SPY...
BEFORE THE CAPTAIN REVEALED HIS PLANS, I SENT FORTH THAT COURIER ...
IF ASAI SUSPECTED AND PURSUED HIM, THE ENEMY MIGHT ALREADY KNOW OF LORD SAKAMOTO'S LOCATION...
HA HA HA!
"APOL-OGIES"? YOU'RE SO FORMAL, KANE-SAN!
IT'S HARD TO TELL!
UH APOL-OGIES, I WAS JOKING
JABBER
JABBER
.....
BADUM
—WORD HAS BEEN SENT TO LORD SAIGOU, BUT...

I HAVE ALREADY SENT HIM SEVERAL LETTERS CONCERNING THE DANGER TO LORD SAKAMOTO'S LIFE.
WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INFORMATION LEAK.
IF ANYONE ELSE HAS SENT SIMILAR LETTERS, IT MATTERS VERY LITTLE.
I ONLY HOPE AT LEAST ONE ARRIVES SAFELY.
...THE CAPTAIN KNEW AND MEANS TO COMFORT ME...
I'VE...
I'VE FAILED HIM YET AGAIN ...!!
CLENCH
.....!
CAPTAIN.
PLEASE... CONSIDER WHAT I SAID EARLIER.
I'LL DO ANYTHING IN MY POWER TO SERVE YOU!!

...I KNOW YOU WILL.
SMILE
THE REAL TEST BEGINS.
NOW THEN, EVERY-ONE.
IN ORDER TO PROTECT LORD SAKAMOTO...
...WE MUST SET OUT FOR KYOTO WITHOUT DELAY!


IF WE WERE TO LOSE LORD SAKAMOTO ...
...WAR COULD BREAK OUT BETWEEN THE SHOGUNATE AND THE SATSUMA-CHOUSHU ALLIANCE.
SUCH A WAR COULD OVERTHROW THE SHOGUNATE, YES...
..BUT THAT WOULD LEAVE THE SATSUMA AND CHOUSHU WITH ABSOLUTE POWER.

EVEN IF THE SHOGUNATE WERE OVERTHROWN ...
...THE DESPOTIC RULE THAT WOULD RESULT WOULD RENDER OUR HOPES FOR THIS NEW AGE MEANINGLESS.
WE MUST...
...BE ALWAYS AT THE READY TO STOP THE WILD RAMPAGES OF THE SATSUMA.

HUH? THEIR "WILD RAMPAGES"?
AREN'T YOU GUYS ALLIED WITH THE SATSUMA?
YOU'RE THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND, AREN'T YOU...?
IT'S TRUE THAT WE WERE ABLE TO USE THE SATSUMA MANSION THANKS TO LORD SAIGOU'S GENEROSITY, BUT...
...WE ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE SATSUMA FACTION.
WE ALL COME FROM DIFFERENT TOWNS AS WELL.
THE SATSUMA FIND IT USEFUL TO KEEP EVEN GUYS LIKE ME AROUND.
SO WE FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

INDEED.
OUR BIRTH AND SOCIAL STATUS MATTER NOT.
ALL THE CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY DESERVE HAPPINESS.
WE FIGHT TO CREATE A WORLD OF TRUE EQUALITY.
AND TO DO THAT, WE MUST FIRST...
...PROTECT THE LIFE OF LORD SAKAMOTO.
THE FATE OF THE EMPIRE...
...HANGS UPON THE SIX OF US GATHERED HERE.
KCHAK
ARE YOU PREPARED TO FIGHT?

KACHK
SHFF
HA!
NOW YOU ASK US!?
KACHK
SHAKK
A WORLD...
...OF TRUE EQUALITY...
HEY!
I WANNA SEE THAT TOO...!
WHEN SAGARA SAID HE'D FIGHT FOR THAT...

THE WORLD YOU WANT TO CREATE...
I WANT THAT TOO!!
KACHAK
...I THOUGHT HE LOOKED ...
...LIKE A TRUE "HERO."
SHNK

WE MUST SET OUT ON THE TOKAIDO.
NAITOU IS SERVING AS OUR YADOWARI. HE SHOULD BE AS FAR AS HAKONE STATION BY NOW.
GOOD!

WE SHOULD REACH IT SOMETIME TOMORROW.
AGREED?

YEAH !!!

—AMO-
TO!
LORD
SAKAMOTO!!

HMM?

TSK, TSK, TSK!
NO NEED TO WORRY!
PLEASE, REMAIN INSIDE THE SATSUMA MANSION FOR THE TIME BEING!!
THE CAPITAL IS CRAWLING WITH GROUPS WHO SEEK TO MURDER YOU!
AH-HA-HA! IT'S ALL RIGHT!
ヒラ WAVE
ヒラ WAVE
THESE ANTICS OF YOURS DAY IN AND DAY OUT ARE MOST TROUBLE-SOME...
L-LORD SAKA-MOTO...
I CAN'T STAY HOLED UP IN HERE!
THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS CALLING ME!
WELL, I'M OFF!
I'M "UMETAROU SAIDANI" RIGHT NOW!
I'M NOT "RYOUMA SAKAMOTO" AT ALL!
.....
HAAH...

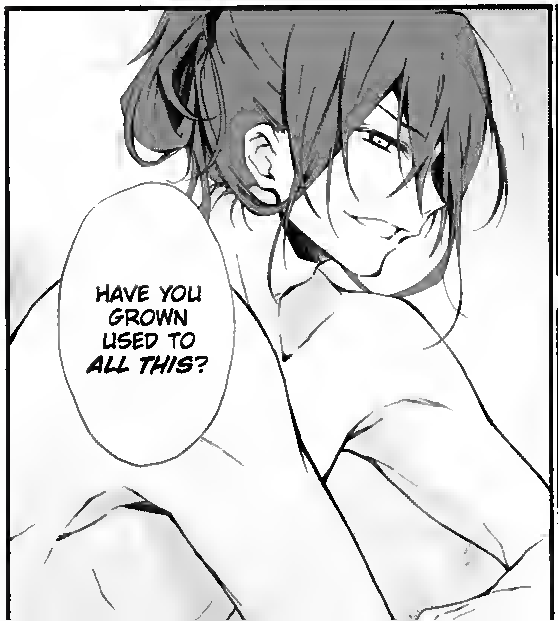
I WONDER...
...IF LORD SAKAMOTO HIMSELF COULD STOP THAT FELLOW...

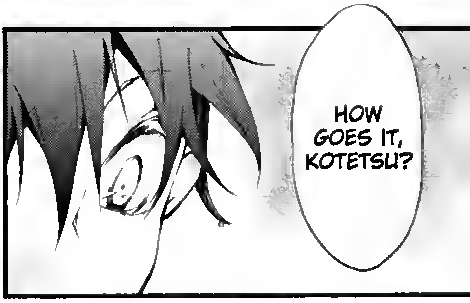
あぱっぱ
SPLASHHH
あはー
PHEW!
WE'LL REACH THE CAPITAL TOMORROW!!
SOUJI... WHERE DOES THE NOURISHMENT OF EVERYTHING YOU'VE EATEN GO?
YOU'RE SKINNY AS A STICK, AS ALWAYS.
SPLISH
YOU SHOULDN'T EAT SO MUCH IF IT ISN'T DOING YOU ANY GOOD...
TURN
NO FAIR!
HA-HA, I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL THE GRUB IN KYOTO!
RIGHT, KOTE-CHA...N...?
DROOP
ぐたぁ...

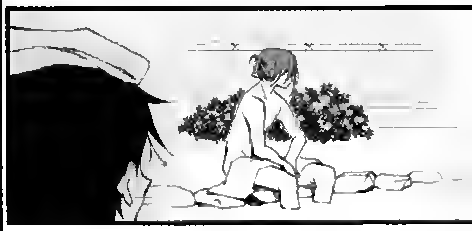
OH, MY!
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME TRAVELING OUTSIDE OF EDO?
SPLASH
WHEE!
SHWIP
SPLASH
WHEE!
ON FOOT, YEAH...
FLOP
WE'VE BEEN WALKING FOR FIVE DAYS STRAIGHT!?
BOTH SHIBUYA AND NISHIMURA...
HOW CAN YOU GUYS BE FEELING SO GREAT...?
OHH! HOW VERY CURIOUS!
SHFF
MUTTER
MUTTER
IF YOU GO BY BULLET TRAIN NOWADAYS, IT TAKES HALF A DAY...
HOW MANY KILOMETERS?
HOW FAR IS IT TO WALK FROM TOKYO TO KYOTO ANYWAY ...?
HM?
BOOM
YOUR... FRONT!!
CAN'T YOU COVER UP A LITTLE !!?
WHOA! H-HEY! SAGARA!!
KOTETSU! YOU MUST TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT LATER—
FLINCH

WITH-OUT HIS SCARF, HE'S EVEN MORE LIKE YAYOI...
HIS LEFT ARM'S STILL BANDAGED...
PLISH
...HUH?
OOKI...
HMPH...
WHAT A CAREFREE FOOL YOU ARE.
HOW WILL YOU FACE WHAT'S TO COME IF YOU RAISE SUCH A FUSS OVER A TRIFLE?
TH-THOSE ABS ARE DEFINITELY NOT YAYOI'S...!!
SHOCK
17
OOKI > YAYOI ≥ ME = DEFEAT (?)
ヤンヤンガーン SHOCK
AREN'T YOU ALL MAKING A LITTLE TOO MERRY ...?
KANE-SAN, YOU'RE LATE!!
STRIDE
STRIDE
YOU'RE NOT MY BROTHER, YOU DEVIANT!!
STAY BACK!
SCUTTLE
SPLASH
O-OOKI-KUN...
...HOW ABOUT GIVING BIG BROTHER A QUICK LOOK AT YOUR STOMACH...?

THAT KANEDA'S A LITTLE TOO SERIOUS SOME-TIMES...
HE'S GOOD AT HIS JOB THOUGH...
STAY AWAY FROM HIM, HE'S DANGEROUS!
...
SPLASH SPLASH
WE'RE GOING TO PROTECT LORD RYOUMA SAKA—
NEVER MIND THAT!
OH!
AND YOU'VE FORGOTTEN TO TAKE OFF YOUR HEAD-BAND, KANEDA-SAN.
WE AREN'T GOING TO THE CAPITAL TO SEEK SPORT...
WHOOA!
IT FIGURES YOU'VE GOT A NICE BODY, KANE-SAN!!
...NOT REALLY.


HAVE YOU GROWN USED TO ALL THIS?


HOW GOES IT, KOTETSU?



UM, WELL... THERE'S A LOT I'M NOT USED TO YET...
HA HA! YOU MUST BE QUITE WEARY.
SHUT UP.
I STILL DON'T HAVE A CLUE HOW TO GET HOME EITHER... BUT...

...IT'S FUN, HANGING OUT WITH THESE GUYS.
AND IT'S NOT MY STYLE TO JUST SIT AROUND, SO...

...FOR NOW, I'M DOING MY BEST AT WHATEVER I CAN DO.

...I SEE.

SPLASH
GOOD!
NOW THEN, EVERY-ONE—

TOMORROW WE ARRIVE IN THE CAPITAL AT LAST.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TOILS ON THIS HASTY JOURNEY.

WE MUST REST WELL TONIGHT, THE BETTER TO CARRY OUT OUR MISSION OF PROTECTING LORD SAKA—
YOUR TOWEL...
WHOOOA!
I TOLD YOU...
HAVE A LITTLE SHAME ALREADY !!
BOOM
FLUTTER

Chapter 7:
The Wild Horse Bolts

OHHHH!
THERE IT IS! THE CAPITAL CITY!!
SO THIS IS KYOTO IN THE EDO PERIOD...
IT LOOKS WAY DIFFERENT FROM WHEN I SAW IT ON A FIELD TRIP...!!
WHEN WE DESCEND FROM THIS RIDGE, THE SANJO BRIDGE WILL BE JUST AHEAD.
LET'S GO.
...KINDA EXCITED!!
YOU KNOW, I'M GETTING ...

OHHHH!
THERE IT IS! THE CAPITAL CITY!!

SO THIS IS KYOTO IN THE EDO PERIOD...
IT LOOKS WAY DIFFERENT FROM WHEN I SAW IT ON A FIELD TRIP...!!
WHEN WE DESCEND FROM THIS RIDGE, THE SANJO BRIDGE WILL BE JUST AHEAD.
LET'S GO.
...KINDA EXCITED!!
YOU KNOW, I'M GETTING ...

HM.
HMM?
OVER HERE!
OH, HEY!!
IS THAT NAITOU-SAN!!?
YOU'VE HAD QUITE THE JOURNEY!
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR GOING AHEAD AS OUR YADOWARI.
NAI-TOU.

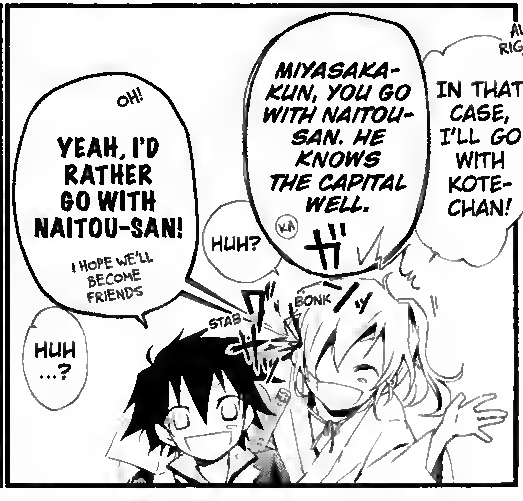
GOING AHEAD?
HE STAYED ONE STEP AHEAD OF US ALL THE WAY TO THE CAPITAL TO ARRANGE OUR LODGINGS.
HUH!?
AT ALL THE INNS WE STAYED AT!? BY HIMSELF ...!?
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A MAJOR HASSLE...
UM...
THANK YOU SO MUCH!!
AH HA HA!
YOU MUST BE KOTETSU MIYASAKA-SAN.
TRULY, I DON'T MIND.
IT WAS AN HONOR TO BE OF SERVICE TO YOU ALL.
TOUCHED

?
A-AT ANY RATE, CAPTAIN, WE HAVE A PROBLEM...
ER, THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE.
SHAKE
SHAKE
UM!
I AM SO, SO GLAD TO MEET YOU...!
BLOOSH
GRASP
(THE FIRST REALLY NICE GUY I'VE MET SINCE I CAME TO THE EDO PERIOD!)
HE'S SO NICE!!
...BUT EVEN LORD SAIGOU WAS AT HIS WIT'S END COMING UP WITH A WAY TO STOP LORD SAKAMOTO FROM RUNNING OFF...
LORD SAKAMOTO WAS SAFELY UNDER PROTECTION AT THE SATSUMA MANSION HERE IN THE CAPITAL UNTIL YESTERDAY...
RUNNING OFF...!?

YES...
LATELY, HE'S TAKEN TO WANDERING ABOUT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. IT SEEMS HE'S GONE OFF SOMEWHERE AT THIS VERY MOMENT.
IF HE SHOULD HAPPEN TO RUN ACROSS THE SHINSENGUMI WHO ARE AFTER HIM...
ALL RIGHT, WE'D BETTER START BY SPLITTING UP TO LOOK FOR HIM!
INDEED, YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT.
I MUST GO TO THE SATSUMA MANSION FIRST, TO MEET WITH LORD SAIGOU.
KANEDA, PLEASE SEE TO THE REST.
LEAVE IT TO ME, SIR.
CAP-TAIN.
I'LL GO WITH YOU TO THE MANS—
OOKI-KUN, YOU'RE NEEDED HERE.
DON'T GO TEARING OFF ON A WHIM.
WHOA...
YOU'RE A BRAVE SOUL, KANEDA-SAN...
GOGO...
GLARE
.....
AH.
OOKI... I'M QUITE ALL RIGHT.
NOW, NOW...
...YES, SIR...
TRAMP
TRAMP

NOW, THEN.
WE'LL SEARCH FOR LORD SAKAMOTO IN PAIRS.

NISHI-YAN... I GUESS IT'S YOU AND ME AGAIN...
THERE, THERE. I'LL BUY YOU SOME DUMPLINGS.
OR MAYBE SOME YATSUHASHI.
NISHIMURA-KUN, PLEASE TAKE SHIBUYA-KU—
NEVER MIND, YOU'VE GOT IT.


OH!
YEAH, I'D RATHER GO WITH NAITOU-SAN!
I HOPE WE'LL BECOME FRIENDS
HUH ...?
MIYASAKA-KUN, YOU GO WITH NAITOU-SAN. HE KNOWS THE CAPITAL WELL.
HUH?
(KA)
ALL RIGHT!!
IN THAT CASE, I'LL GO WITH KOTE-CHAN!
STAB
BONK

WELL...
...I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE MYSELF...
DID HE JUST GO "TCH"!?
FLEEING
YATSU-HASH!
!?
WHY IS OOKI BEING SO SULKY?
WHISPER
TCH.
...YES, SIR.
AND THAT LEAVES YOU WITH ME, OOKI-KUN.

ALL RIGHT, WE'LL GO AND LOOK ALONG SHIJO STREET, WHERE THERE'S LOTS OF FOOT TRAFFIC!
HMPH...
AND PLENTY OF FOOD STALLS ...
THAT'S THE ONLY "INFORMATION" WE'LL FIND THERE.
LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU!
WE'LL TRY GOING SOUTH FOR A LITTLE WAYS.
I HAVE A FEW PLACES IN MIND.
OH-HO!
THAT'S SO NAI. TOU!!
SH
IN THAT CASE, WE'LL GO NORTH.
BEST OF LUCK TO YOU ALL.
NA
.....
ALL RIGHT!
LET THE SEARCH BEGIN!!
YEAH!

HE'S QUITE THE WOMANIZER, AFTER ALL, SO...I THINK THERE'S A HIGH CHANCE THAT HE'S HERE.
WHOA ...!!

I'LL GO AROUND THE SHOPS LOOKING FOR HIM.
MIYASAKA-SAN, PLEASE STAND GUARD HERE AT THE GATE AND WATCH TO SEE IF HE ENTERS OR LEAVES.
SALUTE
Y-
YES, SIR!
GOT IT!
PLEASE DO YOUR BEST, THEN.

"SHIMA-BARA," HUH?
I'VE HEARD OF IT SOME-WHERE, BUT... WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?
THUMP
TMP
HUH?

WHUMP
STAGGER
TRIP
WHOA ...!?
HEY, THAT HURT!!
CROUCH
WATCH WHERE YER GOIN', YA ROTTEN BRAT!
SWFF
...!
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY—
GRAB

.....!
HEY NOW, LITTLE BOY.
AIN'TCHA GONNA SAY YER SORRY?
AW, MAN... THIS ISN'T LOOKING GOOD...!
I'M THE ONE WHO GOT HURT HERE!
YA BETTER MAKE IT UP TO ME IN CASH, YEAH!?
SLAP
!!
HEY! THAT BRAT'S A—
WHAT?

A GIRL ...!?
TUG
YOU'RE ...!!
WHAT!!?
...OH-HO...
YER...
...A RUNAWAY WHORE, AIN'TCHA?
TCH'

IF YA DON'T WANT US TO TURN YA IN, KEEP QUIET AND DO WHAT WE SAY!
HEY, GIRL! YA DON' WANNA GO BACK TO THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT, DO YA?
HEH, IT'S OUR LUCKY DAY!
I'VE NOT YET SUNK SO LOW AS TO BE TOUCHED BY NOBODIES LIKE YOU!!
HMPH! MY BODY MAY ALREADY BE DESPOILED, BUT...!
...!!
WHY, YOU LITTLE BRAT—
GOING BACK WOULD BE FAR BETTER!
HOW ABOUT BEING BOUGHT BY SOMEBODY LIKE ME, THEN? ♪
OHHH!

...OH?
YOU'RE HARDLY A "SOMEBODY" IF YOU FIND PLEASURE IN BUYING CHILDREN!
WH-WHO THE HELL IS THAT!!?
HO-HO! YOU'RE A SPUNKY ONE!
I LIKE YOU!!
RIGHT!
HOW ABOUT THIS, THEN?
FLICK
I'LL APOLOGIZE TO YOU ON BEHALF OF THIS LOVELY YOUNG MAN!
HOW'S THAT!?

SKSH
I'M SORRY!
SLUMP
IT WAS ALL MY FAULT!!!
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING...!!?
HEY...!
HEY, NOW... YA REALLY THINK THAT'LL MAKE US BACK OFF?
NO GOOD, HUH...?
むくっ RISE
GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO BUY THAT LOVELY YOUNG MAN AFTER ALL!

AND THEN I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT WITH YOU, RIGHT?
GRIN
...!
YOU MEN ARE ALL THE SAME...!!
THIS GUY'S AS BAD AS THE OTHER ONES...!
GIMME A BREAK!!
GRAB
YA CAN'T JUST SHOW UP AND—
JANGLE
WHAT THE ...!!?

EEEK!
LIFT
FLOP
M....!
MONEY!
STRIDE
STRIDE
P...
PUT ME DOWN!
HEY!!
FLAIL
FLAIL
HEY!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!
OHH?
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WITH HER!?
YOU CAN'T JUST BUY PEOPLE AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANT TO THEM, YOU CREEP!!

I...
I'M KOTETSU MIYASAKA!
HMM?
AND WHO ARE YOU?
WHAP
OHO! KOTE-TSU, EH?
THEY CALL ME UMETAROU SAIDAI!
WHAP
NICE TO MEET YOU! HA-HA-HA!
H-HEY! IT'S NOT FUNNY!
LET HER GO RIGHT NOW!
!
OH, BUT THIS IS SUCH A LARK!!
YOU'RE AN AWFULLY SERIOUS FELLOW.
LIFT
THM!

SQUEEZE
!
HERE!
JINGLE
NOW, MAKE A GOOD, CLEAN ESCAPE!
CLINK
TH-THIS IS FIVE RYO!?
I CAN'T ACCEPT SO MUCH—
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
YOU'VE GOT A ROUGH ROAD AHEAD, DON'T YOU?
WHAT ...?
THERE NOW! DON'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK!

...NH!
BOW
PUSH
SPIN
RUN ALONG NOW! QUICKLY!
WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY? HE ALMOST REMINDS ME OF...
GAAH!!
...SAGARA...

LURCH
FLINCH
DAMMIT, I JUST HAD TO TRY AND SHOW OFF, DIDN'T I!?
IT WOULDN'T HAVE HURT TO HAVE JUST A LITTLE FUN WITH HER FIRST!
DAM-MIT !!
.....
RUFFLE
RUFFLE

SLAP
...NO, NO!
THIS WON'T DO...
SLAP
THERE HE IS!
HE'S OVER THERE!!

OH-HO! NOW THIS REALLY WON'T DO!
YOU THERE, KOTE-TSU !!
HUH!?
HE'S REALLY LOUD!
FLINCH

NEVER LOSE THAT FIERY NATURE YOU SHOWED JUST NOW!
NO, REALLY, I MEAN IT!! WE'LL NEED MEN LIKE YOU IN THE JAPAN THAT'S TO COME!
NOW, DON'T SNAP AT ME!
YOU MAY BE A RUNT, BUT YOU'VE GOT COURAGE!
A RUNT?
YOU WANNA FIGHT ME OR WHAT?
ALL RIGHT?
I...
I WON'T!

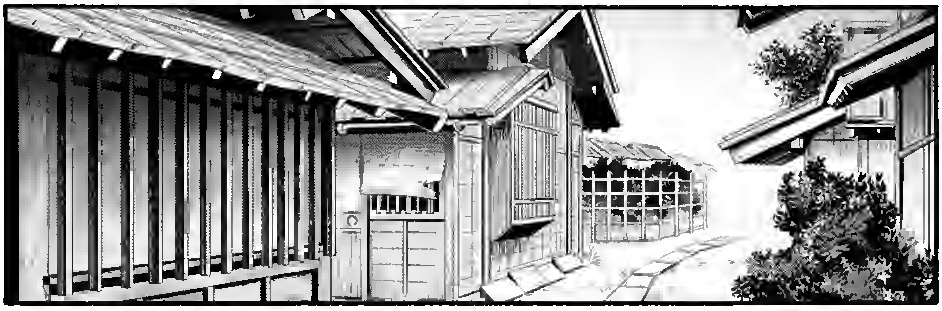
RUSTLE
GOOD!
THAT WAS WELL SAID!!
KA-CLICK
WHA...?

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
KZING
KZING
KZING
THUMP
BUMP
WHA...
WHAAAAT !!!?
AAARGH!
!!
CRUNCH
WHAT THE—
CREAK
CLATTER CLATTER
RATTLE
CRASH
WELL, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY! SEE YOU AROUND, KOTETSU!!
SHWIP
WHAT!!?
YOU...
YOU CAN'T JUST SHOOT AT PEOPLE!!
WHOA!
OH-HO!
I'M OUT OF BULLETS! THAT'S UNUSUAL!!
I'D HAVE LIKED TO TALK TO YOU A BIT MORE, BUT...
RUMMAGE
RUMMAGE

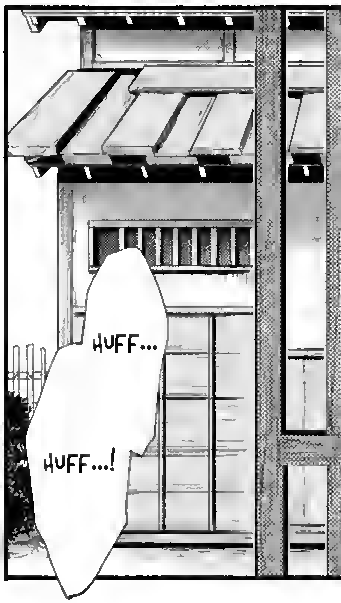
WHOOSH
COME BACK HERE, SAKA-MOTO!!
RYOU-MA—
OH HO HO!
WH-WHAT WAS UP WITH HIM!?
THAT GUY...
HE'S A TOTAL...
YOU WON'T ESCAPE US TODAY!!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
...WHAT!?
RYOUMA... SAKAMO-TO!!?

THAT'S HIM!!? NO WAY...
HE'S THE GUY I SAW IN MY TEXT-BOOKS!?
NOT THAT I REMEMBER HIS FACE VERY WELL, BUT...
AW, MAN, THIS IS BAD...
HE'S GETTING AWAY!!
NGH...
GAH, BUT NAITOU-SAN STILL ISN'T BACK...!!
I'VE GOTTA GO!!
DASH
HUH?

MIYASAKA-SAN...?



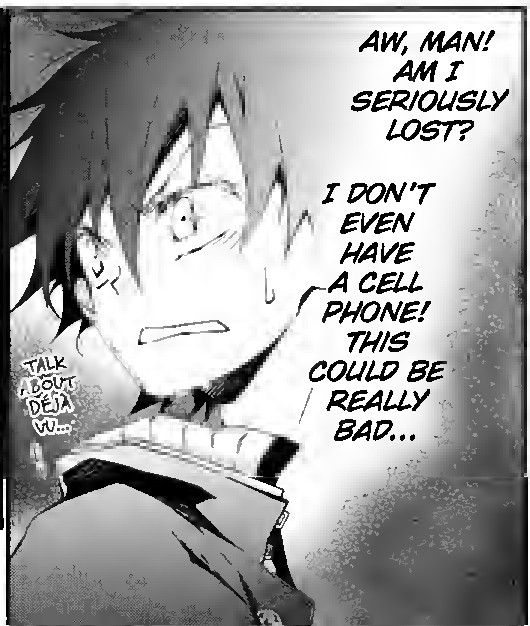
HUH!!?


HUFF...
HUFF...!

WHERE...
...DID RYOUMA GO...!?

I FOLLOWED AS FAST AS I COULD, BUT I LOST SIGHT OF HIM...!
HE'S TOO QUICK AT RUNNING AWAY!!
MAN, I REALLY CAME A LONG WAY THOUGH, DIDN'T I...?
WHERE AM I?

W-WELL, I'D BETTER KEEP LOOKING FOR NOW...

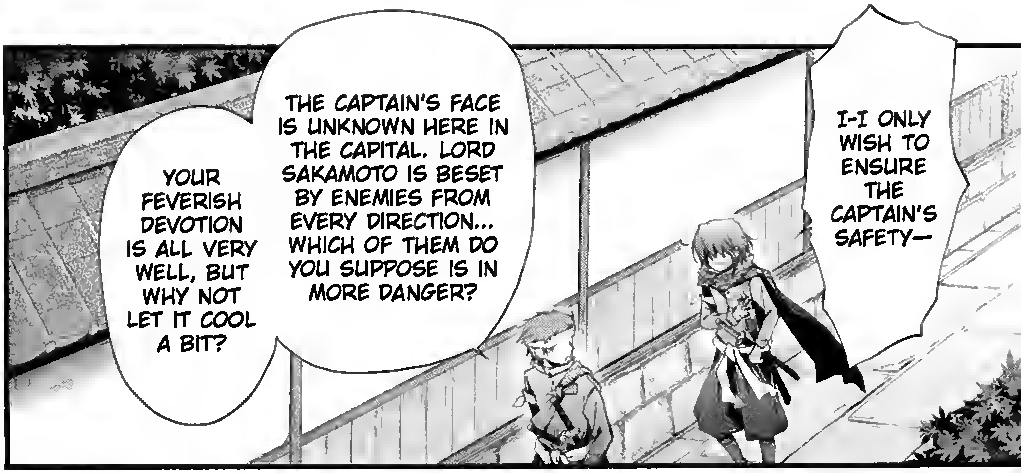

AW, MAN! AM I SERIOUSLY LOST?
I DON'T EVEN HAVE A CELL PHONE! THIS COULD BE REALLY BAD...
TALK ABOUT DÉJÀ VU...

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE.
HUH...?

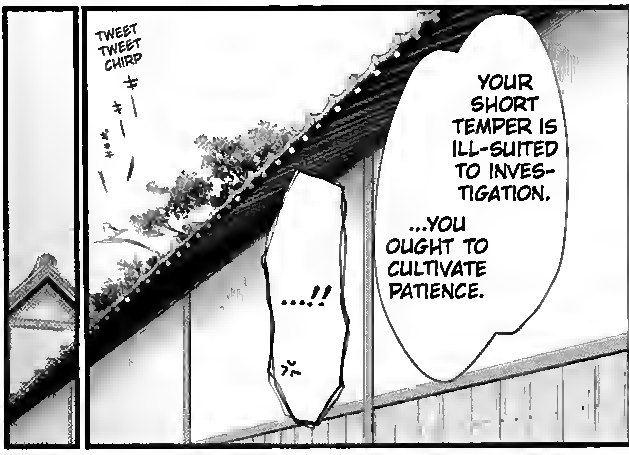
WHO ...
WHO ARE...
!?
GRAB

I SMELL A STRAY CUR FROM TOSA.
YOU...
...KNOW RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO, DON'T YOU?

Chapter 8
WHERE ON EARTH COULD LORD SAKAMOTO BE...?
FLAP
HMPH.
CRUMPLE
WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIDE NOR HAIR OF HIM, EH, KANEDA-SAN?
THIS IS A WASTE OF MY TIME...
MUTTER
I WOULD BE FAR MORE USEFUL PRO-TECTING CAPTAIN SAGARA...
MUTTER
OOKI-KUN.
WHEN IT COMES TO THE CAPTAIN, YOU SEEM TO LOSE SIGHT OF ALL ELSE.


I-I ONLY WISH TO ENSURE THE CAPTAIN'S SAFETY—
THE CAPTAIN'S FACE IS UNKNOWN HERE IN THE CAPITAL. LORD SAKAMOTO IS BESET BY ENEMIES FROM EVERY DIRECTION... WHICH OF THEM DO YOU SUPPOSE IS IN MORE DANGER?
YOUR FEVERISH DEVOTION IS ALL VERY WELL, BUT WHY NOT LET IT COOL A BIT?

...FINE. BUT ENOUGH OF THIS. LET'S RETURN TO THE SATSUMA MANSION FOR FRESH ORDERS.
SPIN
...SO... ...YOU WISH TO RETURN TO THE CAPTAIN EMPTY-HANDED?
FLINCH
.....


YOUR SHORT TEMPER IS ILL-SUITED TO INVESTIGATION. ...YOU OUGHT TO CULTIVATE PATIENCE.
TWEET TWEET CHIRP
...!!

HMM...
SAKAMOTO-SAN SURE IS HARD TO FIND, HUH...?
I GUESS SO, SOUJI.
AND I SURE AM HUNGRY...
I GUESS SO, SOUJI.
.....
WE COULD BUY SOME DUMPLINGS, COULDN'T WE, NISHI-YAN?
HAVEN'T YOU BOUGHT ENOUGH YET?
GLANCE
GLANCE
GURGLE
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO SAY, "I GUESS SO, SOUJI"!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS LEADING UP TO!
GLANCE
GLANCE
FUME
FUME
C'MON... IF YOU'RE GONNA PRETEND YOU'RE NOT LISTENING, AT LEAST SEE IT THROUGH!
ANYWAY, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING AROUND AT ALL THIS TIME—
THERE!
CLAMP
MMPH!

YANK
モガ、
THE SHIN-SENGU-MI!?
PALE BLUE COATS WITH ZIGZAG TRIM...!
HURRY!!
HE'S NEAR SHIMA-BARA!
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
HEY... AREN'T THEY HEADED THE SAME WAY NAITOU-SAN AND KOTE-CHAN WENT?
DO YOU THINK THEY FOUND SAKA-MOTO-SAN!?
ONE... TWO... THREE... YUP, LOADS OF 'EM.
HMM...
FOR THE PRESENT, WE'D BETTER REPORT TO THE CAPTAIN. LET'S HEAD TO THE MANSION.
THERE'RE SO MANY OF THEM.
I HOPE NOTHING HAPPENS TO KOTE-CHAN AND THE OTHERS...

Chapter 8:
A Gang of Mibu Roshi

LITTLE BOY...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SNOOPING DOWN THIS BACK ALLEY...?
I... UH...
I WAS JUST...
STARE
.....
.....
HIS...
HIS EYES ARE SO CREEPY...!!
...HM? BOY.
YOU MUST BE LORD SAKAMOTO'S SERVANT...
SUKEZAE-MON!!
HUH!!?
WHO?
I'M AFRAID I'VE LOST TRACK OF LORD SAKAMOTO. COULD YOU DIRECT ME TO HIM?

YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY! I'M KOTETSU MIYASAKA!!
I JUST GOT HERE FROM EDO, SO I DON'T KNOW MY WAY AROUND! I CAN'T DIRECT YOU ANY-WHERE!
ANYWAY, I WAS JUST LOOKING FOR RYOUMA MYSELF, SO—
SHOVE
WHOA!
THUMP
SO, YOU'RE ONE OF SAKA-MOTO'S CURS AFTER ALL...
HUH!?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "AFTER ALL"!?
YOU FERAL DOG, MAKING JAPAN YOUR DEN...
WHERE IS SAKA-MOTO!!?
ZNSH
SLICE
GNH!!
I J-JUST TOLD YOU, I DUNNO ...!!
I SEE... CHOOSE, THEN.
SHALL I FORCE IT OUT OF YOU, OR WILL YOU DIE HERE AND NOW?
WELL!!?
TAK
I, UH...!

HEYYY!
IF IT ISN'T THE NOBLE SHINSENGUMI! BULLYING THE HELPLESS, EH?
THAT VOICE...
AH!
HULLO!
SAKA-MO-TO...!!
RYOU-MA!
THUMP
RAISING YOUR HAND AGAINST LITTLE BOYS...

KA-CHAK
ISN'T THAT A DISGRACE TO THE SHIN-SENGUMI?
...IF YOU'RE A SAMU-RAI...
...DRAW YOUR BLADE, SAKA-MOTO ...!!
...SWORDS ARE SO BEHIND THE TIMES.

KER-CHAK
SORRY, BUT I'M GONNA HAVE TO...
...PASS 'EM UP THIS TIME!!
BLAM
BLAM
SMITH & WESSON PRESENT ...
...."THE TALE OF THE BAMBOO CUTTER"!
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
WHAT ...!?

THUMP
GOTCHA!!
KOFF!
CRASH
COME ON!!
GRAB
WHOA!
WHA...
!?
CLATTER
CLATTER
...!
WHAT THE HELL ...!?

THAT'S...MY LINE...YOU... CONFOUNDED FOOL..
HUFF...
HUFF...
HUFF...
THAT WAS THE SHIN-SENGUMI'S VICE-COMMANDER... HIJIKATA THE DEMON!!
...YOU...
WHAT WERE YOU... THINKING...?
HUFF...

CUT...!!
I-I WAS JUST ANSWERING HIM HONESTLY!
ANOTHER MINUTE, AND HE'D HAVE CUT YOU DOWN!!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING HAVING A CHAT WITH HIM!!?
HIJIKA-TA!?
I'VE HEARD OF HIM...
SURPRIS-INGLY...

WE'RE DEALING WITH SLIPPERY HIJIKATA, THE MOST TENACIOUS OF THE SHINSEN-GUMI.
HE WON'T LET EITHER OF US OFF LIGHTLY...

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR HEAD!? HOW COULD YOU LET HIM TRICK YOU INTO AN HONEST ANSWER THAT EASILY!?
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN NOT TO TRUST SOME-ONE!? TCH...
HUH...?
TRICK ME?

UM... LISTEN... I CAN FIGHT IN A PINCH TOO, OKAY?
IF WE'RE GONNA RUN AWAY THOUGH, COME WITH ME TO THE SATSUMA MANSION! PLEASE!
ARE YOU ONE OF THE SATSUMA?
UH, NOT REALLY, BUT...
...WE CAME HERE FROM EDO BECAUSE WE NEED YOU, RYOUMA SAKA-MOTO.
OH-HO, ALL THE WAY FROM EDO? THANKS VERY MUCH!
BUT WHAT D'YOU NEED ME FOR?
WELL, WE HEARD THERE WERE ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE TRYING TO MURDER YOU...
SAGARA KNOWS ALL THE DETAILS!!
FOR NOW, JUST COME TO THE—
FREEZE
HUH?
GRAB
WHAT'S WRONG?
...OH NO...
I...

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE SATSUMA MANSION IN THE CAPITAL IS...
SLUMP
PLUS, I'M STILL LOST...
AH HA HA HA HA!
BAM
YOU'RE QUITE FUNNY... YOU KNOW THAT...?
WHAT A FOOL...

DON'T WORRY. I KNOW WHERE IT IS.
AHH...
MY STOMACH HURTS...
IT'S NOT THAT FUNNY...
BUT WITH THE SHINSENGUMI HOT ON OUR TRACKS, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE CARELESS MOVES.
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

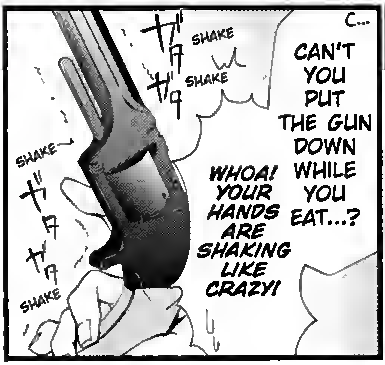
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME! I'M A GENIUS!!
TAP
TAP
...?

SAGARA-SAAAN!
SHI-BUYA.
NISHI-MURA.
TMP
TMP
TMP
OH! THERE HE IS!
LORD NAITOU!?
YOU'VE COME BACK ALREADY?
WELL, YES...I'VE JUST RETURNED FROM SHIMABA-RA...
IT SEEMS HE LOST TRACK OF KOTETSU...
WHAT? IN SHIMA-BARA!?
SH

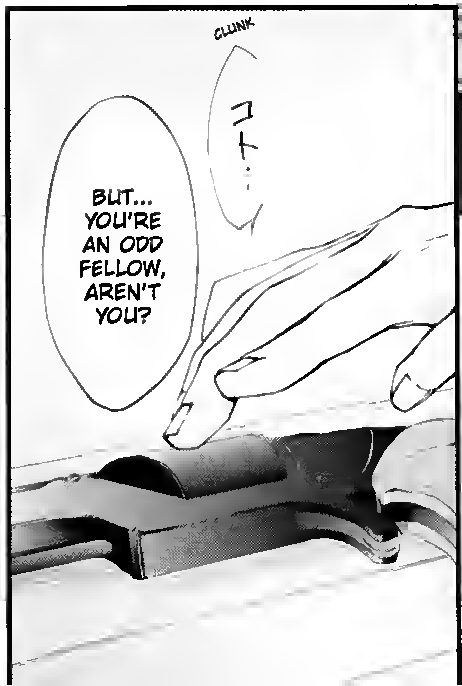
WE JUST SAW THE SHINSENGUMI HEADED IN THE DIRECTION OF SHIMABARA.
WHAT!?
OH DEAR... I WONDER IF KOTETSU IS ALL RIGHT...
THAT DOES SEEM A BIT WORRYING.
WHOA! KANE-SAN, WHEN DID YOU GET HERE!?
FLINCH
I JUST RE-TURNED, BUT...
I'M SORRY. WE LOST ALL SIGN OF HIM...
I WAS TRACKING HIM.
WOW! THAT'S OUR KANEDA!!
I'M SORRY, CAP-TAIN...
WE WERE UNABLE TO TRACE LORD SAKA-MOTO...
HOWEVER, IT SEEMS THERE WAS AN INCIDENT INVOLVING GUNFIRE NEAR SHIMABARA JUST NOW.
ALTHOUGH THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES.
WHEN DID HE HEAR THAT!?
GUN-FIRE ...
SO SAKA-MOTO-SAN REALLY IS THERE ...!?
.....

WE'LL HEAD FOR SHIMABA-RA!
THIS IS...
...YOUR "GENIUS" STRATEGY?

TSK
TSK
TSK
YOU JUST DON'T GET IT, KOTETSU!
IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE JUST KICKING BACK AND EATING RICE BALLS!!


SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
C...
CAN'T YOU PUT THE GUN DOWN WHILE YOU EAT...?
WHOA! YOUR HANDS ARE SHAKING LIKE CRAZY!

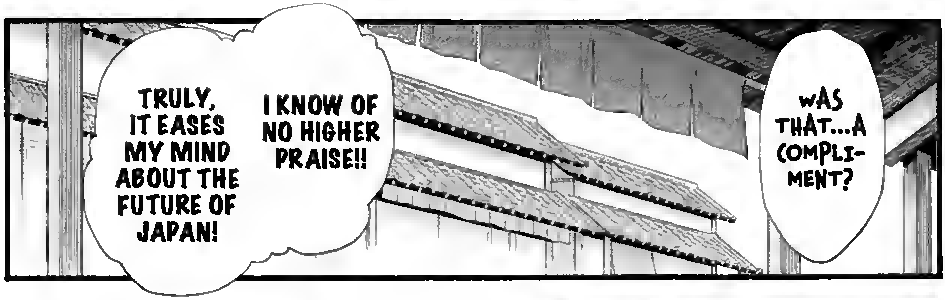
ESPECIALLY IF YOUR OPPONENT IS HIJIKATA!!
YOU CAN'T GO TO WAR ON AN EMPTY STOMACH!
MUNCH MUNCH


CLUNK
BUT... YOU'RE AN ODD FELLOW, AREN'T YOU?

...ARE YOU SCARED?

YOU SAID "NOT AT ALL" TWICE...
HA HA...
AH HA HA HA!
ME, AFRAID!? NOT AT ALL...!!
NOT AT ALL!!

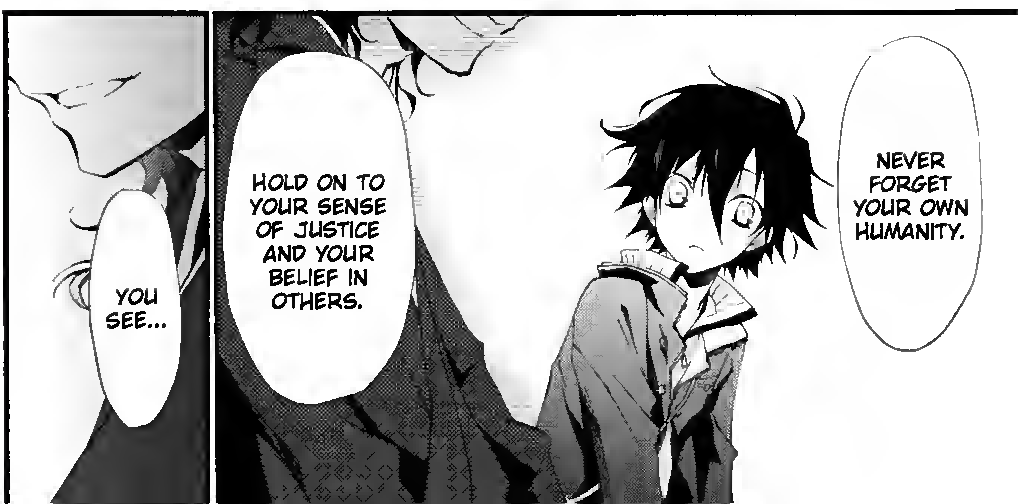
SO HONEST THAT YOU SPEAK WITH AN IDIOT'S CANDOR ...
...OR PERHAPS SO FRANK THAT YOU END UP SAYING THE WRONG THINGS ...?
?
THMP
HMM, HOW SHOULD I SAY IT...?
IT'S A FINE THING!


WAS THAT...A COMPLIMENT?
I KNOW OF NO HIGHER PRAISE!!
TRULY, IT EASES MY MIND ABOUT THE FUTURE OF JAPAN!

HOW CAN I PUT THIS...?

SOMEHOW, WHEN I LOOK AT YOU...
...WANDERING AROUND WITH THESE GUNS OF MINE FEELS FOOLISH.
...?

IF YOU ASK ME, IF YOU WANT TO BE TRUSTED BY OTHERS, YOU HAVE TO TRUST THEM FIRST!
IF YOU FORGET YOUR HUMANITY AND END UP TOO NARROW-MINDED, NOBODY WILL SHED A TEAR WHEN YOU DIE.
WOULDN'T IT BE LONELY TO LIVE A LIFE LIKE THAT?


NEVER FORGET YOUR OWN HUMANITY.
HOLD ON TO YOUR SENSE OF JUSTICE AND YOUR BELIEF IN OTHERS.
YOU SEE...

...YOU CAN'T SAVE A COUNTRY OR A PEOPLE IF YOU CAN'T SEE THINGS FROM OTHER PERSPEC-TIVES.
TO ME, THE "TRUTH" ISN'T ALWAYS WHAT'S "RIGHT."
OH, WHAT-EVER!!
I'M REALLY JUST TRYING TO SOUND IMPRESSIVE, YOU KNOW?
OH...?

AND THAT HURTS!
THIS GUY'S IMPOSSIBLE...
YEAH...? THANKS...
RIGHT, RIGHT!! YOU GET IT, KOTETSU!
BWA HA HA HA HA!
AH HA HA!
WHAP
GIVE ME A FELLOW WHO LIVES HIS LIFE LIKE YOU OVER THAT SLIPPERY RASCAL HIJIKATA ANY DAY!!
WHAP
THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE SINCERE!
...SINCERE.....

SOMEHOW, I STARTED TO SEE...
...WHY SAGARA AND THE OTHERS WERE WORKING SO HARD...
SAY, KOTETSU, HAVE YOU SEEN THE BLACK SHIPS YET?
NOPE, JUST IN MY TEXT-BOOKS ...
TEXT-BOOKS?
HUH? UH... SORRY, JUST MUMBLING ...
...TO PROTECT THIS MAN FOR THE SAKE OF THE COUNTRY.
HA-HA! C'MON, MAN...
THEY'RE ENORMOUS, AND SO AMAZING!!
ALL RIGHT! LET'S VISIT SHIMABARA AS WELL!!
HUH ...?

TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
TRAMP
KONK
...THAT SMELL...
IT'S HIM.
TIME TO CRUSH THAT LOUSE.

HE WON'T ESCAPE US THIS TIME.

Chapter 9:
Duel in the
Capital

Scarlet
EMPIRE

WE...
...CAME TO SHIMA-BARA, BUT...
WE REALLY ...

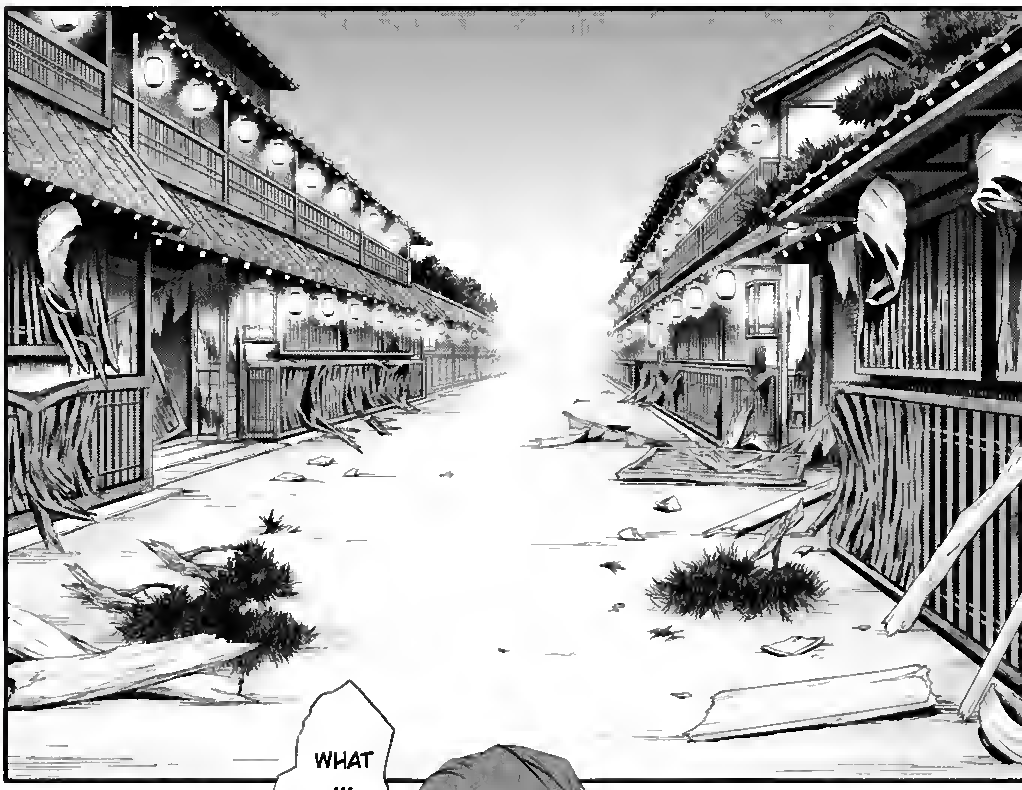
H...
HEY, RYOUMA!
PLAYING PARLOR GAMES
SMACK
HA HA HA!
OH NO, I LOST!

I TOLD YOU, KOTETSU!
THE BEST HIDING PLACE IS RIGHT UNDER THE ENEMY'S NOSE!

WE WENT TO ALL THAT TROUBLE TO ESCAPE THE SHINSENGUMI, SO...
...HOW COME WE'RE BACK IN SHIMABARA!?

THOSE FOOLS WOULD NEVER IMAGINE WE'D COME RIGHT BACK TO SHIMABARA!
GENIUS, EH? AREN'T I A GENIUS!?
LOOK, I'M TELLING YOU...
HE JUST WANTS TO GOOF OFF...
MIYASAKAHAN?
HERE YOU ARE.
HUH!?
OH! I... UM...I DON'T NEED ANY SAKE...!

FWOOM
OH DEAR!
HEE HEE!
HIS BRAIN FRIED
BLLLLUSH
NOW, SAY "AHH"! ☆
HUH?
NO, I...
CHATTER
OH, MIYA-SAKA-HAN, YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD, INNO-CENT BOY!
HOW SWEET! AND SO VERY UNLIKE SAKA-MOTO-HAN!
CHATTER
WHAT'S THAT NOW?
CHATTER
CHATTER
AH... THANKS ...
DO PARDON US. HERE, YOUR CHOP-STICKS.
BOW
BOW
STOP THAT, SAKA-MOTO-HAN!
EEK!
SLAP
OUCH! THAT HURT!
GRAB
AH-HA! HAVEN'T KNOWN A WOMAN YET, EH!?
BWA-HA-HA! WHAT FUN, WHAT FUN!



WHAT ...
...IS THIS ...?

CLENCH
IS THIS THE SHIN-SEN-GUMI'S DOING ...!?
THE SHOPS OF SHIMA-BARA ARE...!!
FWSH
KCHK
GRAB
SOUJI, STOP!!
WHAT? DON'T TRY TO STOP ME, NISHI-MURA!
YOU CAN'T MEAN WE SHOULD LET THIS GO!?
THIS IS THE CAPITAL.
LORD SAIGOU'S DOMAIN...WE CAN'T HAVE OUR NAMES A SUBJECT OF GOSSIP.
THINK OF CAPTAIN SAGARA'S POSITION...!

.....
...OUR PRIORITY FOR NOW IS TO PROTECT LORD SAKA-MOTO...
GRIT
CLATTER
THE...
THE SHINSEN-GUMI! MY LORDS ...!!
WE'RE HERE FOR AN INSPEC-TION.

HIJI-KATA-SEN-SEI...
IF IT'S SAKAMOTO-HAN YOU WANT, HE HASN'T BEEN IN TODAY.
YANK
SO PLEASE, PARDON US...
NGH!!
SNIFF
...YOU DON'T SMELL OF LIES.
I BELIEVE YOU.
THIS FELLOW MAY SIMPLY NOT HAVE BEEN WATCH-ING.
INSPECT EVERY INCH OF THE PLACE.
TOSS
WHAT ...!?
GRAB
TH-THIS IS AN OUT-RAGE—

BUT DON'T ANY OF YOU MOVE UNTIL WE'RE FINISHED SEARCH-ING...!!
SLAM
GRAB
FLIP
NH ...!
SNATCH
CRUNCH
AAAAARGH...!!
AS LONG AS YOU AREN'T HIDING SAKAMOTO, THIS WILL BE OVER QUICKLY...

THIS IS AWFUL...
KCHAK
I CAN'T ...
...TAKE IT ANY-MORE ...!!
!!
SOUJI, WAIT!!
DASH
CAP-TAIN!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM—

!?
CAP-
TAIN!?
SHIN-
SEN-
GUMI
!!
I,
SOUJI
SHIBU-
YA...
...AM
PUTTING
A STOP
TO THIS!!!
STOMP

CLANG
...WHAT?
YOU SAY YOU'RE CALLED SOUJI TOO?
CLAAANG
!!
I WON'T LET YOU...
...TOUCH HIJI-KATA-SAN!!

BADUM
...!!
HAGK!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
STAGGER
...HE'S ILL?
HE'S SOUJI OKITA...!?
IT CAN'T BE...
IF HE'S AILING, SO MUCH THE BETTER!!
DASH
DON'T FALTER NOW!

I'M SHIROU OOKI OF THE SATSUMA ROSHI BAND!
HAVE AT YOU!
LEAP
SWISH
...!!

KCHK
WHAM
.....!!
SKID

KCHK
...YOUR LEFT ARM... IS THAT FOR SHOW?
I'M HAJIME SAITOU, AND YOU'D BEST NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE ME EITHER.
TCH...
CROWD

...CAP...
...TAIN...
WAIT...!
SA-GARA-SAN!
YOU MUSTN'T...!
...YOU'RE THE LEADER, EH?
KACHK
SHFF
YOU SHIN-SENGUMI ARE DESPICA-BLE...!!

WHOOSH
LUNGE
SWOOSH
SWISH
LURCH
USING MY BLADE AS A SPRING-BOARD...!?
!!?

LEAP

CLANG
...I WON'T LET YOU...
SKKRSH!

...DRAG ANY MORE CITIZENS INTO THIS...!!
CLANG
SHIP
SKFF

...WHO ARE YOU?
SOU-ZOU SAGA-RA.
"SAGA-RA"... I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT THAT NAME.
INDEED...AN IMPERIALIST PATRIOT FROM KANTOU, LENDING HIS BLADE TO THE SATSUMA...
—!!

I'M JUST A SIMPLE FARMER FROM EDO...
A "WARRIOR FROM THE WEEDS" JUST LIKE YOU FELLOWS, SO TO SPEAK.

"FROM THE WEEDS"? "JUST LIKE" US...?
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.

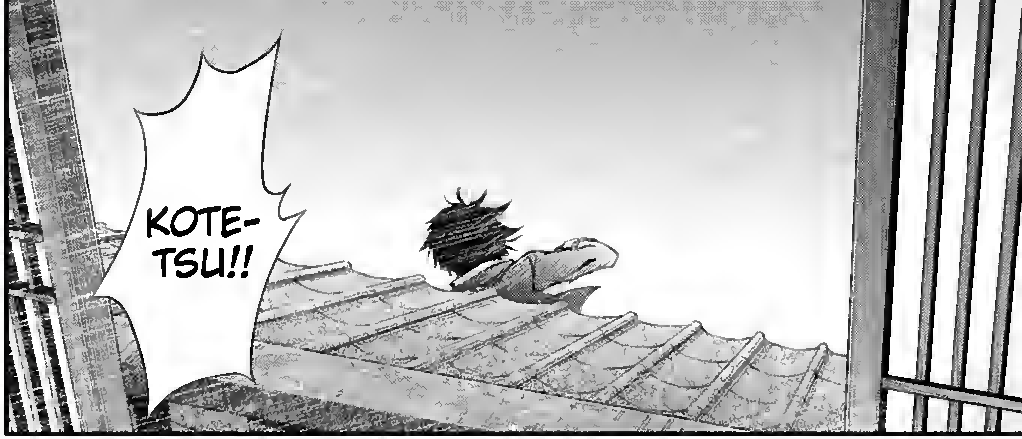
EVEN IF YOU CALL YOURSELF A FARMER, YOU WERE BORN A COUNTRY SAMURAI, WEREN'T YOU?
BORN TO NOBLE STATUS AND THE WARRIOR CODE!?
I REFUSE TO BE BROWBEATEN BY SOME RICH YOUNG DANDY...

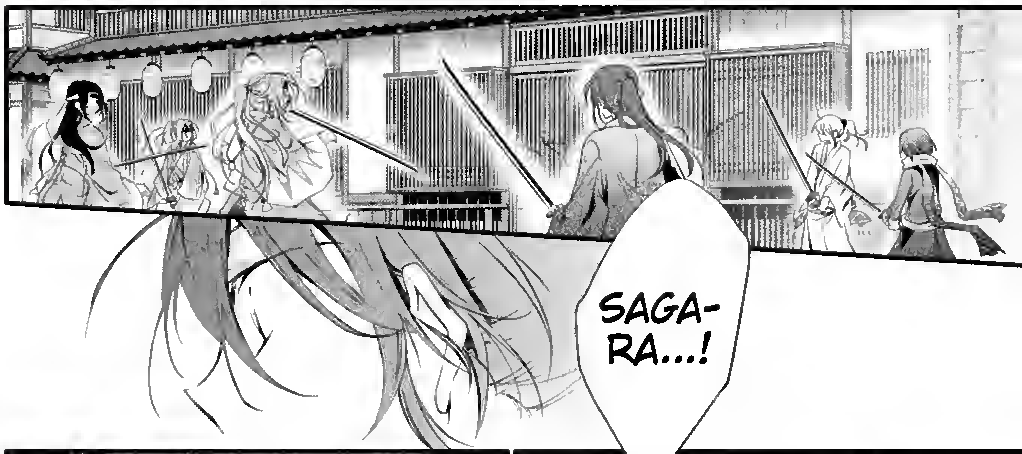
SOMEONE LIKE YOU COULDN'T UNDER-STAND THE FEELINGS OF THE OPPRESSED ...
...EVEN IF YOU DIED TRYING...
IT IS BECAUSE I AM A COUNTRY SAMURAI ...
...THAT I HONOR THE FEELINGS OF THE PEOPLE ABOVE ALL ELSE!!

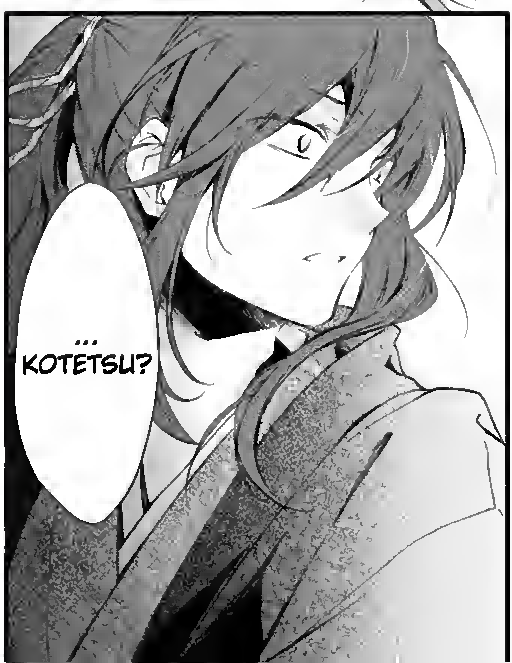
—BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU LOT?
HAVE YOU ENTIRELY FORGOTTEN YOUR IDEALS AS WARRIORS !!?
...AND YET YOU COMMIT THESE UNJUST DEEDS...
YOU SHOULD KNOW THE SUFFERING OF THE PEOPLE WHO FEEL POWERLESS TO FIGHT BACK BETTER THAN ANY-ONE...
EVEN IF WE HAVE...
...WE CAN'T QUIT NOW...
CLENCH
...SA...
...SAGA-RA-SAN...

KSHING
WE'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THIS TERRITORY BY LORD KATAMORI MATSUDAIRA, THE MILITARY COMMIS-SIONER OF KYOTO!
I CARE NOTHING FOR YOUR REASONS.
IF YOU CONTINUE THESE ATROCI-TIES ANY FURTHER ...
WE CAN'T ALLOW SAKA-MOTO...
...TO UNDER-MINE THE SHOGU-NATE'S AUTHORI-TY...!!
...I'LL KILL YOU.
SLAM
SAKA-MOTO-SAMA!
PLEASE, YOU MUST ESCAPE OUT THE BACK DOOR!!

CLATTER
WHAT A STICKY FELLOW HE IS!
DAMN THAT HIJIKATA... HE TRULY HAS A GOOD NOSE!
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE AS PALE AS DEATH.
IT'S THE SHIN-SEN-GUMI ...!!
THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR YOU, AND THEY'VE REACHED THE SUZUYA TEAHOUSE NEXT DOOR!
...SAGARA !?
THOSE ARE MY FRIENDS! I HAVE TO GO!!
WAIT! IT'S DANGER-OUS OUT THERE. YOU CAN'T GO!!
JUST WAIT HERE!
KSHING
KOTE-TSU!?


KOTE-
TSU!!


SAGA-
RA...!

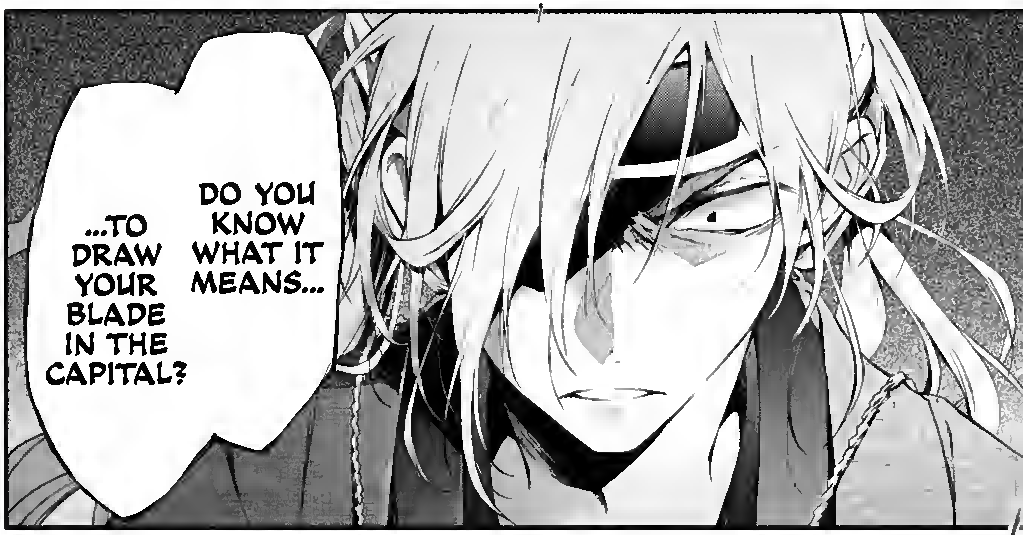

...
KOTETSU?

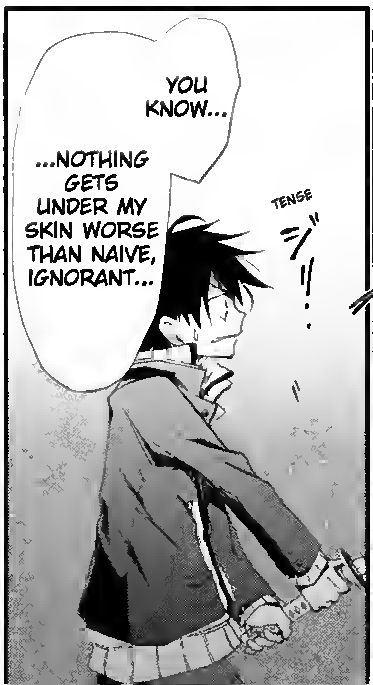
...I KNOW... BUT...
...I CAN'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO THESE DREADFUL SIGHTS!
I FOUND RYOUMA!
SO CALM DOWN! THIS ISN'T THE PLACE TO GET IN A FIGHT!
WE SHOULDN'T BE DRAWING ATTENTION, RIGHT!?
SAITOU-SAN, YOU CAN FALL BACK.
I'M MORE THAN CAPABLE OF HANDLING THIS LOT MYSELF.
SWISH
WHY, YOU ...!!
HA...
SCOLDED BY A GREEN LITTLE BRAT...
SO MUCH FOR THE BOLD IMPERIALIST WARRIOR LORD OF EDO.
KCHING
GAHH! FINE ...!!
C'MON ... I'M TELLING YOU, CALM DOWN ...
DAMMIT, DON'T MAKE FUN OF US...!
YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT!!
YOU GUYS... THERE'S NO POINT FIGHTING HERE...
CLENCH

HIJI-KATA!
I CHAL-LENGE YOU TO A DUEL !!
IF I WIN, THE SHINSENGUMI AND THE ROSHI BAND BOTH HAVE TO LEAVE QUIETLY!
HOW ABOUT THAT, HUH!?

SNAP
...YOU DARE MOCK US, YOU BRAT ...!!?
HUH ...?
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST BURST IN AND MAKE FOOLS OF US, YOU DAMNED MIDGET!?
SNARL
WHAT !?
THAT'S PRETTY RICH, COMING FROM A GUY WHO WEARS PLATFORM SANDALS TO LOOK TALLER!!
PLATFORM SANDALS
TA-DAA!
SNAP
IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE!!
YOU'D BETTER SHUT YOUR FACE, TINY—
KOFF!
HGKH! KOFF!
STAND DOWN, OKITA.
PAT
HI-JIKA-TA...
...SA—

LITTLE BOY...
LOOM


DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS...
...TO DRAW YOUR BLADE IN THE CAPITAL?


YOU KNOW...
...NOTHING GETS UNDER MY SKIN WORSE THAN NAIVE, IGNORANT...
TENSE

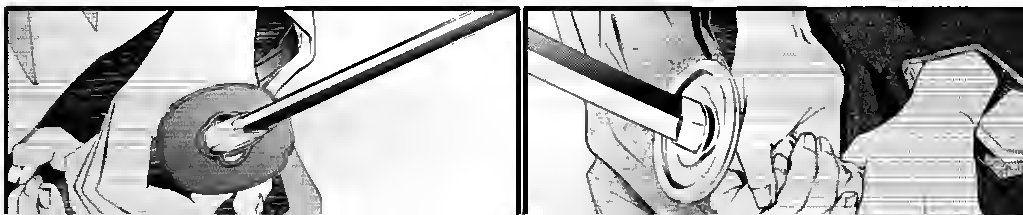
STRIDE
STRIDE
SO, YOU THINK WE COULD "TALK IT OUT"... DO YOU?

FLINCH

...DO-GOODERS LIKE YOU!!
KCHK
LUNGE
OH NO...!
HE'S ONE STEP AHEAD OF ME—
KA-CLANG
KO-TE-TSU !!
KSHING
SKID

CLANK
DIVING IN TO HELP HIM...
YOU'RE ...
DASH

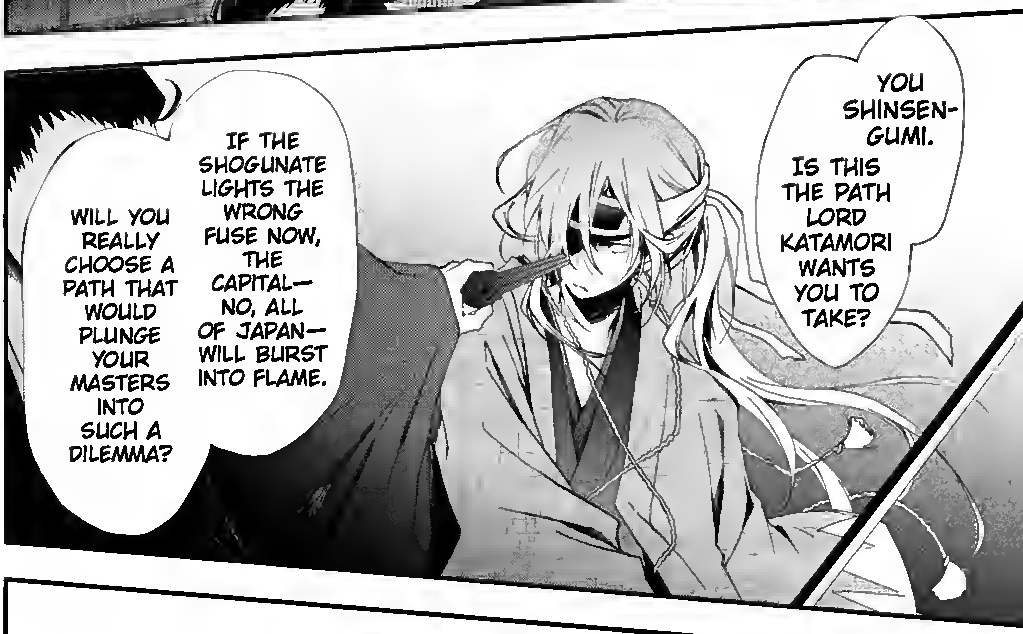
...AS FOOL-ISH AS HE IS!
SAGA-RA!!



...!!?
THAT'S ENOUGH!
SAKA-MOTO ...!!

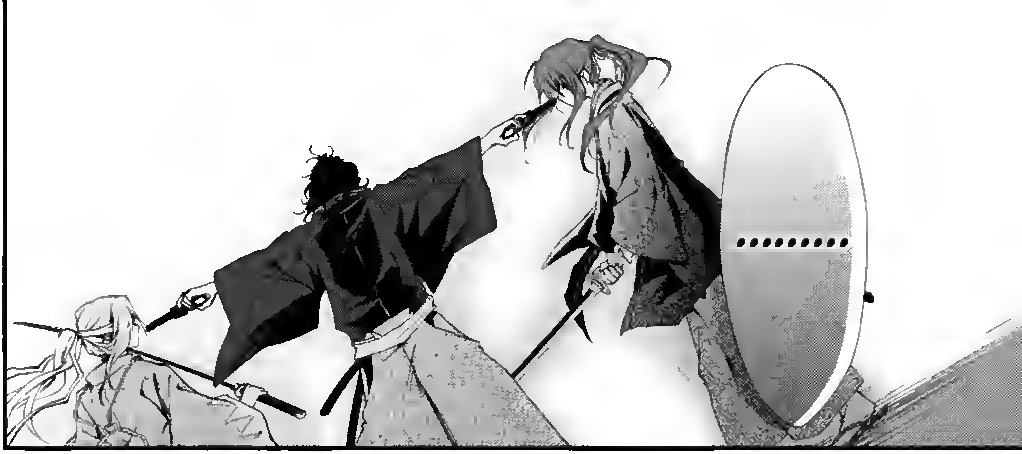
THAT'S ENOUGH!
...!!?
SAKA-MOTO ...!!

WHAT ARE ALL YOU SO-CALLED GROWN MEN DOING...?

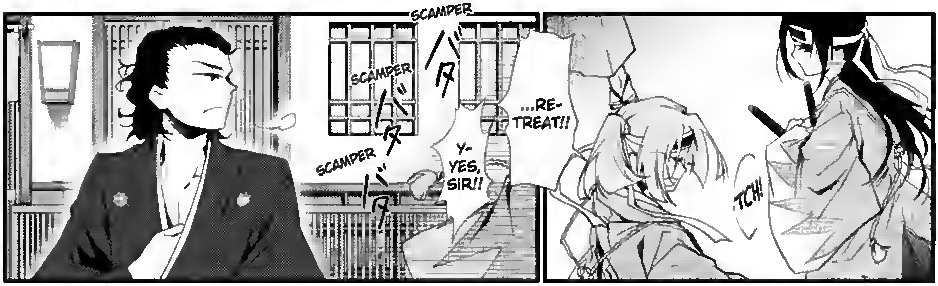

YOU SHINSEN-GUMI.
IS THIS THE PATH LORD KATAMORI WANTS YOU TO TAKE?
IF THE SHOGUNATE LIGHTS THE WRONG FUSE NOW, THE CAPITAL— NO, ALL OF JAPAN— WILL BURST INTO FLAME.
WILL YOU REALLY CHOOSE A PATH THAT WOULD PLUNGE YOUR MASTERS INTO SUCH A DILEMMA?

AND YOU, SAGARA...
SURELY YOU KNOW THE SHIN-SENGUMI WON'T LET YOU OFF LIGHTLY.
IF YOU DIE HERE, YOU'LL DIE LIKE A DOG.
WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE LOYAL COMRADES WHO FOLLOWED YOU HERE!?

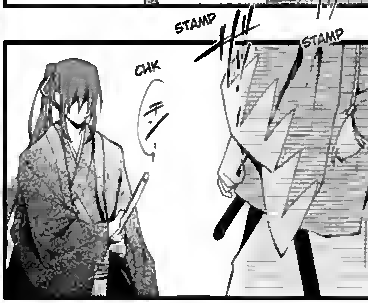
HIJIKATA... IF YOU WANT MY LIFE, YOU'LL HAVE IT ONE OF THESE DAYS.
DO ME A FAVOR AND WITHDRAW THIS TIME.
KA-CHAK
—OF COURSE, IF YOU SAY YOU WON'T...
...I'LL JUST SHOOT THE TWO OF YOU...
...BUT THE DEATHS WON'T STOP AT ONLY TWO, WILL THEY...?


.....

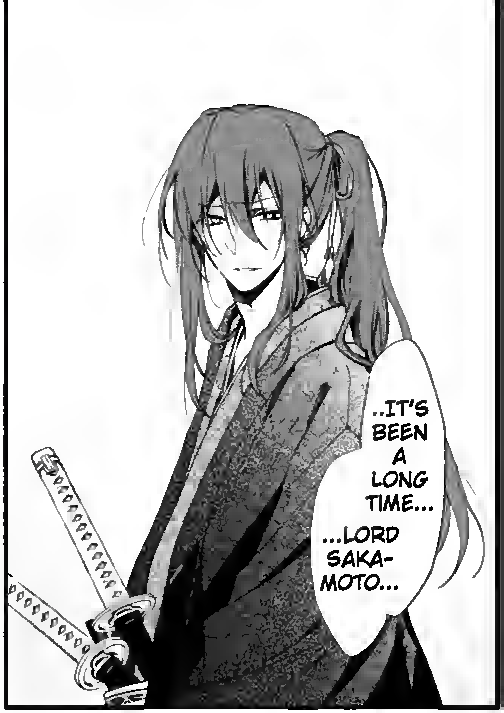
I SAID, WITH-DRAW!! THAT IS AN ORDER!
BUT SAKA-MOTO IS...!!
WHA ...!?
...WE'LL GO.
CHK

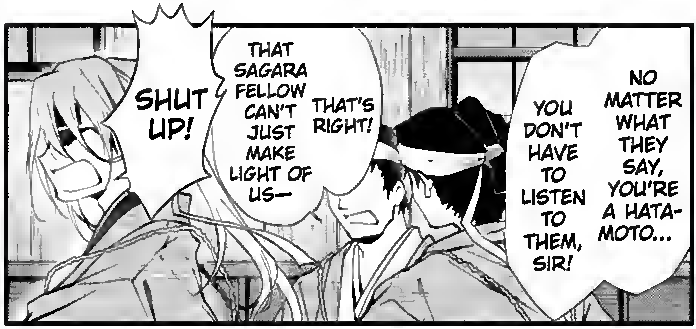

SCAMPER
SCAMPER
SCAMPER
Y- YES, SIR!!
...RE-TREAT!!
TCH!

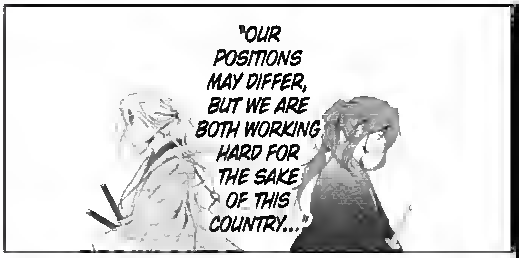
STAMP
STAMP

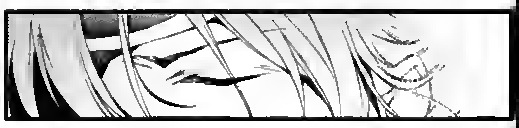

STAMP
STAMP
CHK

OUR POSITIONS MAY DIFFER, BUT WE ARE BOTH WORKING HARD FOR THE SAKE OF THIS COUNTRY.
DON'T FORGET THAT...
LET'S GO.
GRIT
CLAP
CLAP
WELL, WELL, WELL!
WHAT A REUNION, EH? HA-HA-HA!


..IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME...
...LORD SAKA-MOTO...


SHUT UP!
THAT SAGARA FELLOW CAN'T JUST MAKE LIGHT OF US—
THAT'S RIGHT!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THEM, SIR!
NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY, YOU'RE A HATA-MOTO...


"OUR POSITIONS MAY DIFFER, BUT WE ARE BOTH WORKING HARD FOR THE SAKE OF THIS COUNTRY..."



B...
BUT, SIR...
TCH...

I'M SORRY, KONDOU-SAN...IT SEEMS I'VE GROWN SO SHORT-SIGHTED AS TO BE ADMONISHED EVEN BY THE ENEMY.
BUT...
...WE SHINSENGUMI...
...MAY HAVE PASSED THE POINT OF NO RETURN BY NOW...
SAGARA...
DON'T LET THAT HAPPEN TO YOU...

...BUT...
LOOKS LIKE IT'S OVER FOR NOW ...
OH-HO! STRIKING A DEAL WITH ME, EH?
SH
IT'S YOUR FAULT I'M SO HUNGRY, LORD SAKAMOTO! TREAT ME TO SOMETHING!
ALL RIGHT, YOU LOT!! THE SUN'S SETTING, SO WE'D BETTER HEAD BACK TO THE SATSUMA MANSION!!
WE'RE ONLY OUT HERE BECAUSE YOU RAN AWAY FROM THE MANSION...!
...ALL I SEEM TO DO IS GET RESCUED.
ALL RIGHT, IT'S YATSU-HASHI TIME!
WHY, YOU!
THUMP
SHWIP
GLANCE
.....
HMM...
HUH ...!?
MURMUR
IT'S YOU!!
WHY ON EARTH DID YOU COME BACK HERE!!?

Scarlet Empire 2 *End*

Chapter 0: A Heart That Burns Red

I KNOW I'VE TOLD YOU TO BE DILIGENT IN YOUR STUDIES TO PREPARE TO BE THE NEXT FAMILY HEAD, BUT...
...IT MUST BE A BURDEN FOR YOU TO BEAR SOMETIMES
...DOES IT TROUBLE YOU?
...IT DOESN'T TROUBLE ME AT ALL.
I WANT TO GROW UP SOON INTO A MAN WORTHY TO CARRY ON THE KOJIMA FAMILY NAME!
...I SEE.
...STILL...
LISTEN WELL, SHIROU.
THE KOJIMA FAMILY IS NOT OF WARRIOR STOCK.
THE WINDS OF THE WORLD WILL SOMETIMES BLOW AGAINST YOU.
EVEN OUR FELLOW FARMERS MAY NOT ALWAYS THINK KINDLY OF YOU...
RICHES AND POWER CAN EASILY CAUSE MEN TO LOSE SIGHT OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THINGS.

SHIROU...
YOU MUST SEE THE WORLD WITH YOUR OWN EYES AND DISCOVER WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE WITH YOUR OWN POWER.
...?
HA...
STILL TOO SOON, EH?
RUFFLE RUFFLE
わしゃ わしゃ
ACK!?
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY.
CLUNK
TAKE THIS AND RUN ALONG TO YOICHI'S PLACE.
YES, SIR!
YO-CHAN!

I BROUGHT YOU SOME SWEET DUMPLINGS! LET'S ALL EAT THEM LATER!
OH! SHIROU-KUN!
WOW! YOU'RE ALWAYS SO NICE!
SHIRO-CHAN! PIGGY BACK!
WHAT? AGAIN?
I'M SCARED TO LET YO-CHAN!
HE WOBBLES TOO MUCH!
N-NO, I DON'T!
AH HA HA!
TMP TMP TMP
OH! I FORGOT THE DUMPLING BOX...

!!?
CRUNCH
CRASH
CLATTER CLATTER
DASH
YO-CHAN!!
THAT NOISE... WHAT HAP-PENED!?
PLEASE, WE BEG YOUR PARDON! I...I SWEAR WE'LL FIND SOME WAY TO PAY YOU...!!
...WE'RE TIRED OF HEARING THAT OLD LINE
!
SHIROU-KUN...
YO-CHAN ...!?
IT'S SUCH A SHAME...
IF YOU CONTINUE TO FAIL TO PAY YOUR YEARLY TRIBUTE, HOW DOES THAT LOOK TO ALL THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO DO PAY?
IF YOU DON'T COME UP WITH IT QUICKLY, WELL...
...WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THOSE CHILDREN TOMOR-ROW...?
NO...!!! FOR MERCY'S SAKE, SIR! SPARE MY CHIL-DREN—
SCREAMING WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.
.....!!
YOU CAN HIDE AT MY HOUSE FOR NOW!!

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
I... I HAVE TO GO BACK.
WHAT!?
SNIFF
I CAN'T JUST ABANDON MY MOTHER...!
BUT...!
IF YOU GO BACK NOW, WHO KNOWS WHAT THAT SHOGUNATE OFFICIAL WILL DO TO—
GRAB
RATTLE
IF YOU REALLY CARE, THEN PUT A STOP TO IT!!
SHOVE

YOU ALWAYS SAY YOU'RE A FARMER TOO...
...BUT WHAT DOES A RICH BOY LIKE YOU KNOW ABOUT US...?
YOU ACT ALL NICE, BUT DEEP DOWN...
...YOU'RE LAUGHING AT HOW PATHETIC WE ARE, AREN'T YOU...!?
N...
NO...
STOP MAKING US MISERABLE ...
I...
I DIDN'T ...
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!!
YO-CHAN !!

...YO...
...CHAN...?
OH HELLO, KOJIMA-SAN.
THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS PAYING YOUR YEARLY TRIBUTE.
IF ONLY...
...THE FOLK AT THIS HOUSE HAD BEEN AS FAITHFUL IN PAYING AS YOU...
—Y...
YOU!!!
WHY!!?
WHY DID YO-CHAN HAVE TO...!
SHIROU, DON'T!!
GR4ß

HE WORKED SO HARD FOR HIS FAMILY... EVERY DAY!
HE WASN'T ONE BIT DIFFERENT FROM ME, SO...
...WHY WAS I THE ONE WHO GOT TO BE "RICH"...!!?

WHY ...!!?

CLINK

I'M GOING AFTER ALL.

FATHER... I'VE BEEN FEELING SUCH A SENSE OF DEBT.
WONDERING, "WHY WAS I BORN TO A WEALTHY FAMILY?"
BUT I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO CHANGE ANY OF THE THINGS I REGRET.
IF I CAN USE THE POWER I POSSESS TO REFORM THIS BROKEN WORLD...I WON'T FEEL EVEN A SCRAP OF SHAME.
I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER I CAN...
...TO TRY AND CHANGE THE WORLD.
...I SEE.
...THIS... MAY BE THE END...
...SHIROU
FOR YOUR COUNTRY'S SAKE...
...GO FORTH, AND SERVE IT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!
YES, SIR!

IN THIS ERA...
...WITH THIS BLADE, FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME...
I SWEAR ...
...WE'LL CREATE A WORLD WHERE ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE CAN LIVE HAPPILY!
Chapter 0: End

IN THIS ERA...
...WITH THIS BLADE, FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME...
I SWEAR ...
...WE'LL CREATE A WORLD WHERE ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE CAN LIVE HAPPILY!

Chapter 0: End

AFTERWORD

It's me, the artist. Every day it's really been hitting me that the successful publication of Volume 2 is all thanks to your amazing help...!!

The other day I finally purchased the model katana I've been wanting to buy ever since we finished working on Volume 1. I did it right after I finished the colors for Volume 2. I don't know why I didn't buy it sooner.

I can't wait to give it a name and treasure it, but more than that, I want to use it as the perfect drawing reference!! So look forward to the next volume!

I feel like if Tsukioka-sensei is the birth parent for these characters, I'm their adoptive parent. I hope you'll watch over these kids of ours in the next volume and all the rest.

Thank you so, so much for picking up Volume 2 of *Scarlet Empire*!! I'm grateful from the bottom of my heart to see all of you readers again. (;△;)

I hope we'll be able to keep going like this and release Volume 3 soon. Please stick with me this year too!
I'm counting on you! (≧人≦;)

Thank you so much!

TSUKIOKA
2014.2.21

Thank you so much for reading!

I'm on Twitter too, so drop by anytime... @c10un23

Tanaka
2014.2.27

Special Thanks

~ Art Staff ~
- Bison-sama
- Mumimu-sama
- Kaneda-sama
- Toyokura Akino-sama
- A2-sama
- Igoiyagoshishi-sama

~ Assistant ~
- Ao-chan-sama

~ Cheer Squads ~
Everyone in:
- Ashitaba-gumi
- Kenta-gumi
- Tsukiji-gumi

- Our manager, S-sama

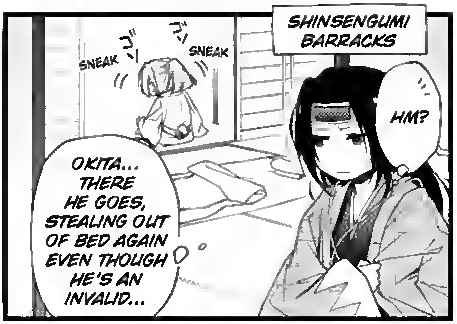
and you!

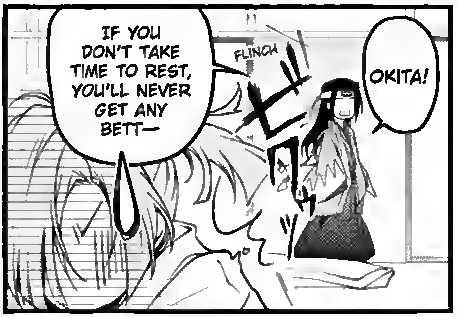
We love getting mail with your thoughts and reactions!
Address letters to:
Hanjirou Tsukioka or Hikaru Tanaka
c/o Yen Press
1290 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10104

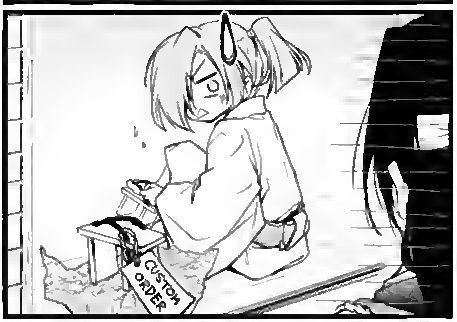
Scarlet
EMPIRE

HA-HA-HA... WHER-EVER YOU LOOK...
...ALL YOU'LL SEE ARE AFTER-IMAGES OF ME!
Chaos EMPIRE
LIGHT SPEED VERSION

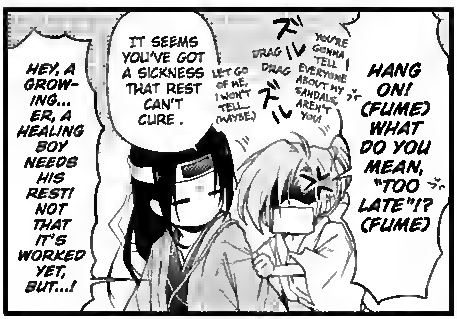
Incurable 1

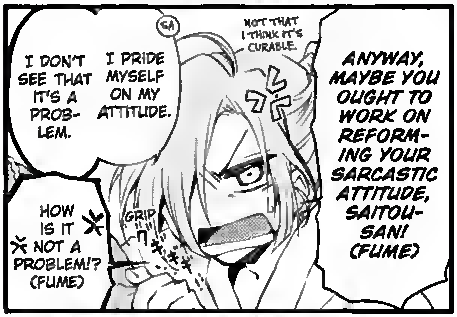


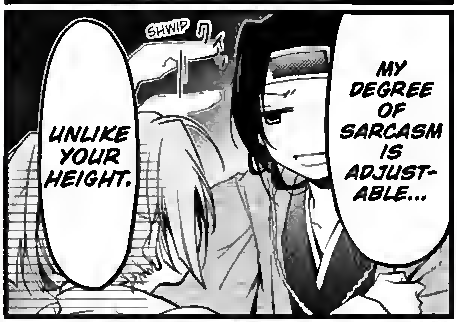




Incurable 2


HEY, A GROWING... ER, A HEALING BOY NEEDS HIS REST! NOT THAT IT'S WORKED YET, BUT...!
IT SEEMS YOU'VE GOT A SICKNESS THAT REST CAN'T CURE.
LET GO OF ME. I WON'T TELL. (MAYBE)
DRAG
DRAG
YOU'RE GONNA TELL EVERYONE ABOUT MY SANDALS, AREN'T YOU!
HANG ON! (FUME) WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "TOO LATE"!? (FUME)


I DON'T SEE THAT IT'S A PROBLEM.
I PRIDE MYSELF ON MY ATTITUDE.
NOT THAT I THINK IT'S CURABLE.
ANYWAY, MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO WORK ON REFORMING YOUR SARCASTIC ATTITUDE, SAITOU-SAN! (FUME)
HOW IS IT NOT A PROBLEM!? (FUME)
GRIP



GLOSSARY

COMMON HONORIFICS

no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.

-san, -han: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.

-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.

-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.

-chan: An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.

-sensei: A respectful term for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

-niisan, nii-san: A term of endearment meaning "big brother" that may be more widely used to address any young man who is like a brother, regardless of whether he is related or not.

Bakumatsu: The final years of the Tokugawa shogunate (1853–1868).

Black Ships: The nickname given to the first Western battleships that arrived in Japan during the Edo period.

Edo period: The period between 1603 and 1868, when Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. Also known as the Tokugawa period.

Fujisawa Station: The sixth of the fifty-three rest stations along the Tokaido.

Hakone Station: The tenth of the fifty-three rest stations along the Tokaido.

Hatamoto: A samurai granted the privileged rank of an official retainer of the shogunate.

Kantou: The "eastern" region of Japan, where modern-day Tokyo lies.

Roshi: A samurai without a liege lord. Considered socially inferior. (Also known as a "*ro*nin.")

Ryo: An old form of Japanese currency, predating the yen. Equivalent to 4,000 mon.

Sanjo Bridge: The "Great Third Avenue Bridge" famous for being the endpoint of the Tokaido.

Shimabara: A famous pleasure district inhabited by entertainers and captive courtesans.

Shijo Street: One of the largest and most well-traveled streets in Kyoto.

Shinsengumi: A special police force formed in Kyoto to protect the shogunate during the upheaval of the Bakumatsu. Famous for their blue uniforms.

Smith & Wesson: A famous American maker of firearms, founded in the mid-1800s.

Tale of the Bamboo Cutter: A well-known Japanese fairy tale.

Tokaido: The most famous of the five great highways of Japan during the Edo period. Highly traveled in its heyday, it stretched from what is now called Tokyo to Kyoto.

Tosa: A feudal domain in the south of Japan. Birthplace of Ryouma Sakamoto.

Wakizashi: A short Japanese sword, traditionally worn paired with a longer blade like a katana or a tachi.

Yadowari: Someone who goes ahead of a traveling party to arrange for lodgings.

Yatsuhashi: A famous Kyoto-area dessert, flavored with cinnamon and stuffed with various fillings. Somewhat resembles a rice crepe.

Yojimbo: A bodyguard or sword for hire. Considered less honorable than a samurai.

SCARLET EMPIRE 2

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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New York, NY 10104

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First Yen Press ebook Edition: November 2015

ebook ISBN: 978-0-316-35492-9

App ISBN: 978-0-316-35493-6